MEMOIRS

OF

EMMA COURTNEY.

VOL. II.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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OF

EMMA COURTNEY.

BY MARY HAYS.

"The perceptions of perſons in retirement are very different from thoſe of people in the great world: their paſſions, being differently modified, are differently expreſſed; their imaginations, conſtantly impreſſed by the ſame objects, are more violently affected. The ſame ſmall number of images continually return, mix with every idea, and create thoſe ſtrange and falſe notions, ſo remarkable in people who ſpend their lives in ſolitude." ROUSSEAU.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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TO AUGUSTUS HARLEY.

"MY friend, my ſon, it is for your benefit, that I have determined on reviewing the ſentiments, and the incidents, of my paſt life. Cold declamation can avail but little towards the reformation of our errors. It is by tracing, by developing, the paſſions in the minds of others; tracing them, from the ſeeds by which they have been generated, through all their extended conſequences, that we learn, the more effectually, to regulate and to ſubdue our own.

"I repeat, it will coſt me ſome pain to be ingenuous in the recital which I have pledged myſelf to give you; even in the moment when I reſume my pen, prejudice continues to ſtruggle with principle, and I feel an inclination to retract. While unfolding a ſeries of error and mortification, I tremble, leſt, in warning you to ſhun the rocks and quickſands amidſt which my little bark has foundered, I ſhould forfeit your reſpect and eſteem, the pride, and the comfort, of my declining years. But you are deeply intereſted in my narrative, you tell me, and you entreat me to proceed."

CHAP. I.

CHANGE of ſcene, regular employment, attention to my pupils, and the conſcious pride of independence, afforded a temporary relief to my ſpirits.

My

My firſt care, on my arrival in town, was to gladden the mind of my dear benefactreſs, by a minute detail of my preſent comforts and occupations.

She had charged me with affectionate remembrance and letters to her ſon. I encloſed theſe letters; and, after informing him (in the cover) of the change in my ſituation, and the incident which had occaſioned it, complained of the ſilence he had obſerved towards my laſt letter.

—"If," ſaid I, "from having obſerved the ſocial and ſympathetic nature of our feelings and affections, I ſuffered myſelf to yield, involuntarily, to the ſoothing idea, that the ingenuous avowal of an attachment ſo tender, ſo ſincere, ſo artleſs, as mine, could not have been unaffecting to a mind with which my own proudly claimed kindred:—if I fondly believed, that ſimplicity, modeſty, truth —the eye beaming with ſenſibility, the cheek mantling with the glow of affection, the features ſoftened, the accents modulated, by ineffable tenderneſs, might, in the eyes of a virtuous man, have ſup-

plied the place of more dazzling accomplishments, and more seductive charms: if I over-rated my own merit, and my own powers—surely my mistakes were sufficiently humiliating! You should not, indeed you should not, have obliged me to arrive at the conviction through a series of deductions so full of mortification and anguish. You are too well acquainted with the human heart not to be sensible, that no certainty can equal the misery of conjecture, in a mind of ardour —the agonizing images which *suspense* forces upon the tender and sensible heart! You should have written, in pity to the situation of my mind. I would have thanked you for being ingenuous, even though, like Hamlet, you had *spoke daggers*. I expected it, from your character, and I had a claim to your sincerity.

"But it is past!—the vision is dissolved! The barbed arrow is not extracted with more pain, than the enchantments of hope from the ardent and sanguine spirit! But why am I to lose your friend-

friendſhip? My heart tells me, I have not deſerved this! Do not ſuſpect, that I have ſo little juſtice, or ſo little magnanimity, as to refuſe you the privilege, the enviable privilege, of being maſter of your own affections. I am unhappy, I confeſs; the principal charm of my life is fled, and the hopes that ſhould enliven future proſpects are faint: melancholy too often obſcures reaſon, and a heart, perhaps too tender, preys on itſelf.

"I ſuſpect I had formed ſome vain and extravagant expectations. I could have loved you, had you permitted it, with no mean, nor common attachment. —My words, my looks, my actions, betrayed me, ere I ſuffered my feelings to dictate to my pen. Would to God I had buried this fatal ſecret in the bottom of my ſoul! But repentance is, now, too late. Yet the ſenſible heart yearns to diſcloſe itſelf—and to whom can it confide its ſentiments, with equal propriety, as to him who will know how to pity the errors, of which he feels himſelf, however involuntarily, the cauſe? The world

might think my choice in a confident ſingular; it has been my misfortune ſeldom to think with the world, and I ought, perhaps, patiently to ſubmit to the inconveniences to which this ſingularity has expoſed me.

"I know not how, without doing myſelf a painful violence, to relinquiſh your ſociety; and why, let me again aſk, ſhould I? I now deſire only that repoſe which is the end of doubt, and this, I think, I ſhould regain by one hour's frank converſation with you; I would compoſe myſelf, liſten to you, and yield to the ſovereignty of reaſon. After ſuch an interview, my mind—no longer harraſſed by vague ſuſpicion, by a thouſand nameleſs apprehenſions and inquietudes—ſhould ſtruggle to ſubdue itſelf—at leaſt, I would not permit it to dictate to my pen, not to bewilder my conduct. I am exhauſted by perturbation. I aſk only certainty and reſt.

"EMMA."

A few

A few days after I had written the preceding letter, Mr. Harley called on me, Mrs. Denbeigh was with me on his entrance; I would have given worlds to have received him alone, but had not courage to hint this to my relation. Overwhelmed by a variety of emotions, I was unable for ſome time to make any reply to his friendly enquiries after my health, and congratulations on my amended proſpects. My confuſion and embarraſſment were but too apparent; perceiving my diſtreſs, he kindly contrived to engage my hoſteſs in diſcourſe, that I might have time to rally my ſpirits. By degrees, I commanded myſelf ſufficiently to join in the converſation—I ſpoke to him of his mother, expreſſed the lively ſenſe I felt of her goodneſs, and my unaffected regret at parting with her. Animated by my ſubject, and encouraged by the delicacy of Auguſtus, I became more aſſured: we retraced the amuſements and ſtudies of H———ſhire, and two hours paſſed delightfully and inſenſibly away, when Mrs. Den

was called out of the room to ſpeak to a perſon who brought her letters and intelligence from the India Houſe. Mr. Harley, riſing at the ſame time from his ſeat, ſeemed about to depart, but heſitating, ſtood a few moments as if irreſolute.

"You leave me," ſaid I, in a low and tremulous tone, "and you leave "me ſtill in ſuſpenſe?"

"Could you," replied he, viſibly affected, "but have ſeen me on the receipt "of your laſt letter, you would have "perceived that my feelings were not "enviable—Your affecting expoſtula-"tion, added to other circumſtances of "a vexatious nature, oppreſſed my ſpi-"rits with a burthen more than they were "able to ſuſtain."

He reſumed his ſeat, ſpoke of his ſituation, of the tenure on which he held his fortune, — "I am neither a ſtoic nor "a philoſopher," added he,—"I knew "not how—*I could not anſwer your letter.* "What ſhall I ſay?—I am with-held "m explaining myſelf further, by "reaſons

" reaſons—*by obligations*—Who can look
" back on every action of his paſt life
" with approbation? Mine has not been
" free from error! I am diſtreſſed, per-
" plexed—*Inſuperable obſtacles* forbid
" what otherwiſe"———

" I feel," ſaid I, interrupting him,
" that I am the victim of my own weak-
" neſs and vanity—I feel, that I have been
" ruſhing headlong into the miſery which
" you kindly ſought to ſpare me—I am
" ſenſible of your delicacy—of your hu-
" manity!—And is it with the full im-
" preſſion of your virtues on my heart
" that I muſt teach that heart to renounce
" you—renounce, for ever, the man
" with whoſe pure and elevated mind
" my own panted to mingle? My reaſon
" has been blinded by the illuſions of my
" ſelf-love—and, while I ſeverely ſuffer,
" I own my ſufferings juſt—yet, the ſen-
" timents you inſpired were worthy of
" you! I underſtand little of—I have
" violated common forms—ſeeking your
" tenderneſs, I have perhaps forfeited
" your eſteem!"

"Far, *very far*, from it—I would, but "cannot, ſay more."

"Muſt we, then, ſeparate for ever—"will you no longer aſſiſt me in the pur-"ſuit of knowledge and truth—will you "no more point out to me the books I "ſhould read, and aid me in forming a juſt "judgment of the principles they contain "—Muſt all your leſſons be at an end—"all my ſtudies be reſigned? How, with-"out your counſel and example, ſhall I "regain my ſtrength of mind—to what "*end* ſhall I ſeek to improve myſelf, when "I dare no longer hope to be worthy of "him—"

A flood of tears choked my utterance; hiding my face with my hands, I gave way to the kindly relief, but for which my heart had broken. I heard footſteps in the paſſage, and the voice of Mrs. Denbeigh as ſpeaking to her ſervant—covered with ſhame and grief, I dared not in this ſituation appear before her, but, ruſhing out at an oppoſite door, hid myſelf in my chamber. A train of confuſed recollections tortured my mind, I concluded,

cluded, that Auguſtus had another, a prior attachment; I felt, with this conviction, that I had not the fortitude, and that perhaps I ought not, to ſee him again. I wrote to him under this impreſſion; I poured out my ſoul in anguiſh, in ſympathy, in fervent aſpirations for his happineſs. Theſe painful and protracted conflicts affected my health, a deep and habitual depreſſion preyed upon my ſpirits, and, ſurveying every object through the medium of a diſtempered imagination, I grew diſguſted with life.

CHAP. II.

I BEGAN, at length, to think, that I had been too precipitate, and too ſevere to myſelf.—Why was I to ſacrifice a friend, from whoſe converſation I had derived improvement and pleaſure? I repeated this queſtion to myſelf, again and again; and I bluſhed and repented. But

I deceived myſelf. I had too frequently acted with precipitation, I determined, now, to be more prudent—I waited three months, fortified my mind with many reflections, and reſumed my pen——

TO AUGUSTUS HARLEY.

"NEAR three months have elapſed, ſince I laſt addreſſed you. I remind you of this, not merely to ſuppreſs, as it ariſes, any apprehenſion which you may entertain of further embarraſſment or importunity: for I can no longer afflict myſelf with the idea, that my peace, or welfare, are indifferent to you, but will rather adopt the ſentiment of Plato—who on being informed, that one of his diſciples, whom he had more particularly diſtinguiſhed, had ſpoken ill of him, replied, to the ſlanderer—'I do not believe you, for it is impoſſible that I ſhould not be eſteemed by one whom I ſo ſincerely regard.'

"My motive, for calling to your remembrance the date of my laſt, is, that you

you ſhould conſider what I am now about to ſay, as the reſult of calmer reflection, the deciſion of judgment after having allowed the paſſions leiſure to ſubſide. It is, perhaps, unneceſſary to premiſe, that I am not urged on by pride, from an obſcure conſciouſneſs of having been betrayed into indiſcretion, to endeavour to explain away, or to extenuate, any part of my former expreſſions or conduct. To a mind like yours, ſuch an attempt would be impertinent; from one like mine, I hope, ſuperfluous. I am not aſhamed of being a human being, nor bluſh to own myſelf liable to 'the ſhakes and agues of his fragile nature.' I have ever ſpoken, and acted, from the genuine dictates of a mind ſwayed, at the time, by its own views and propenſities, nor have I heſitated, as thoſe views and propenſities have changed, to avow my further convictions—'Let not the coldly wiſe exult, that their heads were never led aſtray by their hearts.' I have all along uſed, and ſhall continue to uſe, the unequivocal language of ſincerity.

"However

"However *romantic* (a vague term applied to every thing we do not underſtand, or are unwilling to imitate) my views and ſentiments might appear to many, I dread not, from you, this frigid cenſure. 'The ideas, the aſſociations, the circumſtances of each man are properly his own, and it is a pernicious ſyſtem, that would lead us to require all men, however different their circumſtances, to act in many of the common affairs of life, by a preciſe, general rule.'* The genuine effuſions of the heart and mind are eaſily diſtinguiſhed, by the penetrating eye, from the vain oſtentation of ſentiment, lip deep, which, cauſing no emotion, communicates none—Oh! how unlike the energetic ſympathies of truth and feeling—darting from mind to mind, enlightening, warming, with electrical rapidity!

"My ideas have undergone, in the laſt three months, many fluctuations. My *affection* for you (why ſhould I ſeek for

* Godwin's Political Juſtice.

vague

vague, inexpreſſive phraſes?) has not ceaſed, has not diminiſhed, but it has, in ſome meaſure, changed its nature. It was originally generated by the report, and cemented by the knowledge, of your virtues and talents; and to virtue and talents my mind had ever paid unfeigned, enthuſiaſtic, homage! It is ſomewhere ſaid by Rouſſeau—'That there may exiſt ſuch a ſuitability of moral, mental, and perſonal, qualifications, as ſhould point out the propriety of an union between a prince and the daughter of an executioner.' Vain girl that I was! I flattered myſelf that between us this ſympathy really exiſted. I dwelt on the union between mind and mind—ſentiments of nature gently inſinuated themſelves—my ſenſibility grew more tender, more affecting—and my imagination, ever lively, traced the glowing picture, and dipped the pencil in rainbow tints! Poſſeſſing one of thoſe determined ſpirits, that is not eaſily induced to relinquiſh its purpoſes—while I conceived that I had only your pride, or your inſenſibility, to combat,

bat, I wildly determined to perſevere.—A further recapitulation would, perhaps, be unneceſſary:—my ſituation, alas! is now changed.

"Having then examined my heart, attentively and deliberately, I ſuſpect that I have been unjuſt to myſelf, in ſuppoſing it incapable of a diſintereſted attachment.—Why am I to deprive you of a faithful friend, and myſelf of all the benefits I may yet derive from your converſation and kind offices? I aſk, why? And I ſhould, indeed, have cauſe to bluſh, if, after having had time for reflection, I could really think this neceſſary. Shall I, then, ſign the unjuſt decree, that women are incapable of energy or fortitude? Have I exerciſed my underſtanding, without ever intending to apply my principles to practice? Do I mean always to deplore the prejudices which have, ſyſtematically, weakened the female character, without making any effort to riſe above them? Is the example you have given me, of a ſteady adherence to honour

nour and principle, to be merely reſpected, without exciting in my boſom any emulation? Dare I to anſwer theſe queſtions in the affirmative, and ſtill aſk your eſteem—the eſteem of the wiſe and good? —I dare not! No longer weakened by alternate hopes and fears, like the reed yielding to every breeze, I believe myſelf capable of acting upon firmer principles; and I requeſt, with confidence, the reſtoration of your friendſhip! Should I afterwards find, that I have over-rated my own ſtrength, I will frankly tell you ſo, and expect from your humanity thoſe allowances, which are but a poor ſubſtitute for reſpect.

"Believe, then, my views and motives to be ſimply ſuch as I ſtate them; at leaſt, ſuch, after ſeverely ſcrutinizing my heart, they appear to myſelf; and reply to me with ſimilar ingenuouſneſs. My expectations are very moderate: anſwer me with ſimplicity—my very ſoul ſickens at evaſion! You have, undoubtedly, a right to judge and to determine for yourſelf; but it will be but juſt to ſtate to me

the

the reaſons for, and the reſult of, that judgment; in which caſe, if I cannot obviate thoſe reaſons, I ſhall be bound, however reluctantly, to acquieſce in them. Be aſſured, I will never complain of any conſequences which may enſue, even, from the utterance of all truth.

"EMMA."

CHAP. III.

THIS letter was ſucceeded by a renewal of our intercourſe and ſtudies. Mrs. Denbeigh, my kind hoſteſs, was uſually of our parties. We read together, or converſed only on general topics, or upon ſubjects of literature. I was introduced by Mr. Harley to ſeveral reſpectable families, friends of his own and of his mother's. I made many indirect enquiries of our common acquaintance,

ance, with a view to diſcover the ſuppoſed object of my friend's attachment, but without ſucceſs. All that he had, himſelf, ſaid, reſpecting ſuch an engagement, had been ſo vague, that I began to doubt of the reality of its exiſtence.—When, in any ſubſequent letters (for we continued occaſionally to correſpond) I ventured to allude to the ſubject, I was warned 'not to confound my own conceptions with real exiſtences.' When he ſpoke of a ſuſceptibility to the tender affections, it was always in the paſt time, 'I *have* felt,'—'I *have* been—' Once he wrote—'His ſituation had been rendered difficult, by a combination of *peculiar circumſtances*; circumſtances, with which but few perſons were acquainted.' Sometimes he would affect to reflect upon his paſt conduct, and warn me againſt appreciating him too highly. In fine, he was a perfect enigma, and every thing which he ſaid or wrote tended to increaſe the myſtery.

A reſtleſs, an inſatiable, curioſity, devoured me, heightened by feelings that every

every hour became more imperious, more uncontroulable. I propoſed to myſelf, in the gratification of this curioſity, a ſatisfaction that ſhould compenſate for all the injuries I might ſuffer in the career. This inquietude prevented my mind from reſting; and, by leaving room for conjecture, left room for the illuſions of fancy, and of hope. Had I never expreſſed this, he might have affected ignorance of my ſenſations; he might have pleaded guiltleſs, when, in the agony of my ſoul, I accuſed him of having ſacrificed my peace to his diſingenuouſneſs—but vain were all my expoſtulations!

"If," ſaid I, "I have ſought, too earneſtly, to learn the ſtate of your affections, it has been with a view to the more effectually diſciplining of my own—of ſtifling every *ignis fatuus* of falſe hope, that making, even, impoſſibilities poſſible, will ſtill, at times, continue to miſlead me. Objects ſeen through obſcurity, imperfectly diſcerned, allow to the fancy but too free a ſcope; the mind grows debilitated, by brooding over its apprehenſions;

henſions; and thoſe apprehenſions, whether real or imaginary, are carried with accumulated pain to the heart. I have ſaid, on this ſubject, you have a right to be free; but I am, now, doubtful of this right: the health of my mind being involved in the queſtion, has rendered it a queſtion of *utility*—and on what other baſis can morals reſt?"

I frequently reiterated theſe reaſonings, always with encreaſed fervor and earneſtneſs: repreſented—" that every ſtep I took in advance would be miles in return—every minute that the blow was ſuſpended, prepared it to deſcend with accumulated force." I required no particulars, but merely requeſted to be aſſured of *a preſent, exiſting, engagement.* I continued, from time to time, to urge this ſubject.

" Much," ſaid I, " as I eſteem you, and deeply as a thouſand aſſociations have fixed your idea in my heart—in true candour of ſoul, I, yet, feel myſelf your ſuperior.——I recollect a ſentiment of Richardſon's Clariſſa that always pleaſed me,

me, and that may afford a teſt, by which each of us may judge of the integrity of our own minds—'I ſhould be glad that you, and all the world, knew my heart; let my enemies ſit in judgment upon my actions; fairly ſcanned, I fear not the reſult. Let them aſk me my moſt ſecret thoughts; and, whether they make for me, or againſt me, I will reveal them.'

"This is the principle, my friend, upon which I have acted towards you. I have ſaid many things, I doubt not, which make againſt me; but I truſted them to one, who told me, that he had made the human heart his ſtudy: and it is only in compliance with the prejudices of others, if I have taken any pains to conceal all I have thought and felt on this, or on any other, ſubject, from the reſt of the world. Had I not, in the wild career of fervent feeling, had ſufficient ſtrength of mind to ſtop ſhort, and to reaſon calmly, how often, in the bitterneſs of my ſpirit, ſhould I have accuſed you of ſporting with my feelings, by involving me in a hopeleſs maze of conjecture—by leaving me a prey

to

to the conſtant, oppreſſive, apprehenſion of hearing ſomething, which I ſhould not have the fortitude to ſupport with dignity; which, in proportion as it is delayed, ſtill contributes to harraſs, to weaken, to incapacitate, my mind from bearing its diſcloſure.

"I know you might reply—and more than nine-tenths of the world would juſtify you in this reply—'That you had already ſaid, what ought to have been ſufficient, and would have been ſo to any other human being;—that you had not ſought the confidence I boaſt of having repoſed in you;—and that, ſo far from affording you any ſatisfaction, it has occaſioned you only perplexity. If my own deſtiny was not equivocal, of what importance could it be to me, and what right had I to enquire after circumſtances, in which, however affecting, I could have no real concern.'

"You may think all this, perhaps—I will not ſpare myſelf—and it may be reaſonable. *But could you ſay it*—and have you, indeed, ſtudied the human heart—

have you, indeed, ever felt the affections?—Whatever may be the event—and it is in the mind of powers only that paſſions are likely to become fatal—and however irreproachable every other part of your conduct may have been, I ſhall, *here*, always ſay, you were culpable!"

I changed my ſtyle. "I know not," ſaid I, "the nature of thoſe ſtern duties, which oblige you to with-hold from me your tenderneſs; neither do I any longer enquire. I dread, only, leſt I ſhould acquire this knowledge when I am the leaſt able to ſupport it. Ignorant, then, of any reaſons which ſhould prevent me from giving up my heart to an attachment, now become interwoven with my exiſtence, I yield myſelf up to theſe ſweet and affecting emotions, ſo neceſſary to my diſpoſition—to which apathy is abhorrent. 'The affections (truly ſays Sterne) muſt be exerciſed on ſomething; for, not to love, is to be miſerable. Were I in a deſart, I would find out wherewith in it to call forth my affections. If I could do no better, I would faſten them upon

upon ſome ſweet myrtle, or ſeek ſome melancholy cypreſs to connect myſelf to —I would court their ſhade, and greet them kindly for their protection. I would cut my name upon them, and ſwear they were the loveliest trees throughout the deſart. If their leaves withered, I would teach myſelf to mourn; and, when they rejoiced, I would rejoice with them.'

"An attachment, founded upon a full conviction of worth, muſt be both ſafe and ſalutary. My mind has not ſufficient ſtrength to form an abſtract idea of perfection. I have ever found it ſtimulated, improved, advanced, by its affections. I will, then, continue to love you with fervor and purity; I will ſee you with joy, part from you with regret, grieve in your griefs, enter with zeal into your concerns, intereſt myſelf in your honour and welfare, and endeavour, with all my little power, to contribute to your comfort and ſatisfaction.—Is your heart ſo differently conſtituted from every other human heart, that an affection, thus ardent and ſincere, excites

in it no grateful, and ſoothing, emotions? Why, *then*, withdraw yourſelf from me, and by that means afflict, and ſink into deſpondency, a mind that entruſts its peace to your keeping.

"EMMA."

We met the next day at the houſe of a common friend. My accents, involuntarily, were ſoftened, my attentions pointed.—Manifeſtly agitated, embarraſſed, even diſtreſſed, Auguſtus quitted the company at an early hour.

It would be endleſs to enumerate all the little incidents that occurred; which, however trifling they might appear in the recital, continued to operate in one direction. Many letters paſſed to the ſame purport. My curioſity was a conſuming paſſion; but this inflexible, impenetrable, man, was ſtill ſilent, or alternately evaded, and reſented, my enquiries. We continued, occaſionally, to meet, but generally in company.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

DURING the enſuing ſummer, Mr. Harley propoſed making a viſit to his mother, and, calling to take his leave of me, on the evening preceding his journey, accidentally found me alone.—We entered into converſation on various ſubjects: twilight ſtole upon us unperceived. The obſcure light inſpired me with courage: I ventured to reſume a ſubject, ſo often diſcuſſed; I complained, gently, of his reſerve.

"Could I ſuppoſe," he aſked, "that he had been without *his ſhare* of ſuffering?"

I replied ſomething, I ſcarce know what, adverting to his ſtronger mind.

"Strength!" ſaid he, turning from me with emotion, "rather ſay, weakneſs!"

I reiterated the important, the ſo often propoſed, enquiry—"Had he, or had he not, a *preſent, exiſting, engagement?*"

He endeavoured to evade my queſtion —I repeated it—He anſwered, with a degree of impatience, " *I cannot tell* " *you*; if I could, do you think I would " have been ſilent ſo long?"—as once, before, he ſpoke of the circumſtances of his paſt life, as being of ' *a ſingular, a peculiar, nature.*'

At our ſeparation, I aſked, if he would write to me during his abſence. ' Certainly, he would.' The next morning, having ſome little commiſſions to execute for Mrs. Harley, I ſent them, accompanied by a few lines, to her ſon.

" Why is it," ſaid I, " that our ſagacity, and penetration, frequently deſert us on the moſt intereſting occaſions? I can read any mind with greater facility than I can read your's; and, yet, what other have I ſo attentively ſtudied? This is a problem I know not how to ſolve. One concluſion will force itſelf upon me—if a miſtaken one, whom have you to blame? —That an *honourable*, ſuitable, engagement, could have given no occaſion for myſtery." I added, " I ſhould depend on

on hearing from him, according to his promiſe."

Week after week, month after month, wore away, and no letter arrived. Perturbation was ſucceeded by anxiety and apprehenſion; but hearing, through my maternal friend, Mrs. Harley, of the welfare of this object of our too tender cares, my ſolicitude ſubſided into deſpondency. The preſſure of one corroding train of ideas preyed, like a canker-worm, upon my heart, and deſtroyed all its tranquillity.

In the beginning of the winter, this myſterious, inexplicable, being, again returned to town. I had undertaken a little buſineſs, to ſerve him, during his abſence. —I tranſmitted to him an account of my proceedings; ſubjoining a gentle reproach for his unkind ſilence.

"You promiſed you would write to me," ſaid I, "during your reſidence in ——ſhire. I therefore depended upon hearing from you; and, yet, I was diſappointed. You ſhould not, indeed you ſhould not, make theſe experiments upon

my mind. My ſenſibility, originally acute, from having been too much exerciſed, has become nearly morbid, and has almoſt unfitted me for an inhabitant of the world. I am willing to believe, that your conduct towards me has originated in good motives, nevertheleſs, you have made ſome ſad miſtakes—you have *deeply*, though undeſignedly, wounded me: I have been harraſſed, diſtreſſed, mortified. You know not, neither will I attempt to deſcribe, all I have ſuffered! language would be inadequate to paint the ſtruggles of a delicate, ſuſceptible, mind, in ſome peculiar and intereſting ſituations.

"You may ſuſpect me of wanting reſolution, but ſtrong, perſevering affections, are no mark of a weak mind. To have been the wife of a man of virtue and talents was my deareſt ambition, and would have been my glory: I judged myſelf worthy of the confidence and affection of ſuch a man—I felt, that I could have united in his purſuits, and ſhared his principles—aided the virtuous energies of his mind, and aſſured his domeſtic comfort.

I earneſtly

I earneſtly ſought to inſpire you with tenderneſs, from the conviction, that I could contribute to your happineſs, and to the worth of your character. And if, from innumerable aſſociations, I at length loved your perſon, it was the magnanimity of your conduct, it was your virtues, that firſt excited my admiration and eſteem. But you have rejected an attachment originating in the higheſt, the pureſt, principles—you have thrown from you a heart of exquiſite ſenſibility, and you leave me in doubt, whether you have not ſacrificed that heart to prejudice. Yet, contemned affection has excited in my mind no reſentment; true tenderneſs is made up of gentle and amiable emotions; nothing hoſtile, nothing ſevere, can mix with it: it may gradually ſubſide, but it will continue to ſoften the mind it has once ſubdued.

"I ſee much to reſpect in your conduct, and though, it is probable, ſome parts of it may have originated in miſtaken principles, I truſt, that their ſource was pure! I, alſo, have made many miſ-

takes—have been guilty of many extravagances. Yet, diſtruſt the morality, that ſternly commands you to pierce the boſom that moſt reveres you, and then to call it virtue—*Yes! diſtruſt and ſuſpect its origin!*" I concluded with expreſſing a wiſh to ſee him—'*merely as a friend*'—requeſting a line in reply.

He wrote not, but came, unexpectedly came, the next evening. I expreſſed, in lively terms, the pleaſure I felt in ſeeing him. We converſed on various ſubjects, he ſpoke affectionately of his mother, and of the tender intereſt ſhe had expreſſed for my welfare. He enquired after my purſuits and acquirements during his abſence, commending the progreſs I had made. Juſt before he quitted me, he adverted to the reproach I had made him, for not having written to me, according to his engagement.

"Recollect," ſaid he, "in the laſt letter I received from you, before I left "London, you hinted ſome ſuſpicions—" I looked at him, "and what," added he, "could I reply?"

I was

I was diſconcerted, I changed colour, and had no power to purſue the ſubject.

CHAP. V.

FROM this period, he continued to viſit me (I confeſs at my ſolicitation) more frequently. We occaſionally reſumed our ſcientific purſuits, read together, or entered into diſcuſſion on various topics. At length he grew captious, diſputatious, gloomy, and imperious—the more I ſtudied to pleaſe him, the leſs I ſucceeded. He diſapproved my conduct, my opinions, my ſentiments; my frankneſs offended him. This change conſiderably affected me. In company, his manners were ſtudiouſly cold and diſtant; in private capricious, yet reſerved and guarded. He ſeemed to overlook all my efforts to pleaſe, and, with a ſevere and penetrating eye, to ſearch only for my errors—errors, into which I was but too

eaſily betrayed, by the painful, and delicate, ſituation, in which I had placed myſelf.

We, one day, accompanied Mrs. Denbeigh on a viſit of congratulation to her brother (eldeſt ſon of my deceaſed uncle Mr. Melmoth), who had, when a youth, been placed by his father in a commercial houſe in the Weſt Indies, and who had juſt returned to his native country with an ample fortune. His ſiſter and myſelf anticipated the pleaſure of renewing our early, fraternal, affection and intimacy, while I felt a ſecret pride in introducing to his acquaintance a man ſo accompliſhed and reſpectable as Mr. Harley. We were little aware of the changes which time and different ſituations produce on the character, and, with hearts and minds full of the frank, lively, affectionate, youth, from whom we had parted, ſeven years ſince, with mutual tears and embraces, ſhrunk ſpontaneouſly, on our arrival at Mr. Melmoth's elegant houſe in Bedford ſquare, from the cold ſalutation, of the haughty, opulent, purſe-

proud

proud, Planter, ſurrounded by oſtentatious luxuries, and evidently valuing himſelf upon the conſequence which he imagined they muſt give him in our eyes.

Mr. Harley received the formal compliments of this favourite of fortune with the eaſy politeneſs which diſtinguiſhes the gentleman and the man of letters, and the dignified compoſure which the conſciouſneſs of worth and talents ſeldom fails to inſpire. Mr. Melmoth, by his awkward and embarraſſed manner, tacitly acknowledged the impotence of wealth, and the real ſuperiority of his gueſt. We were introduced by our ſtately relation to his wife, the lady of the manſion, a young woman whom he had accidentally met with in a party of pleaſure at Jamaica, whither ſhe had attended a family in the humble office of companion or chief attendant to the lady. Faſcinated by her beauty and lively manner, our trader had overlooked an empty mind, a low education, and a doubtful character, and, after a very few interviews, tendered

to her acceptance his hand and fortune; which, though not without ſome affectation of doubt and delay, were in a ſhort time joyfully accepted.

A gentleman joined our party in the dining-room, whom the ſervant announced by the name of Pemberton, in whom I preſently recognized, notwithſtanding ſome years had elapſed ſince our former meeting, the man of faſhion and gallantry who had been the antagoniſt of Mr. Francis, at the table of my father. He had lately (we were informed by our hoſt) been to Jamaica, to take poſſeſſion of an eſtate bequeathed to him, and had returned to England in the ſame veſſel with Mr. and Mrs. Melmoth. After an elegant dinner of ſeveral courſes had been ſerved up and removed for the deſert, a deſultory converſation took place.

Mr. Pemberton, it appeared, held a commiſſion in the militia, and earneſtly ſolicited Mrs. Melmoth, on whom he laviſhed a profuſion of compliments, to grace their encampment, which was to be ſtationed in the enſuing ſeaſon near

one

one of the faſhionable watering places, with her preſence.

This requeſt the lady readily promiſed to comply with, expreſſing, in tones of affected ſoftneſs, her admiration of military men, and of the

'Pride, pomp, and circumſtance of glorious war!'

"Do you not think, Miſs Courtney," ſaid ſhe, turning to me, "that ſoldiers "are the moſt agreeable and charming "men in the world?"

"Indeed I do not, Madam; their trade "is *murder*, and their trappings, in my "eyes, appear but as the gaudy pomp of "ſacrifice."

"*Murder*, indeed! What a harſh "word—I declare you are a ſhocking "creature—There always have been wars "in the world, and there always muſt be: "but ſurely you would not confound the "brave fellows, who fight to protect their "King and Country, and *the ladies*, with "common ruffians and houſebreakers!"

"All

"All the difference between them is, "that the one, rendered desperate by pas- "sion, poverty, or injustice, endeavours "by *wrong* means to do himself *right*, and "through this terrible and pitiable mis- "take destroys the life or the property of "a fellow being—The others, wantonly "and in cold blood, cut down millions "of their species, ravage whole towns "and cities, and carry devastation through "a country."

"What *odd notions!* Dear, Mr. Pem- "berton, did you ever hear a lady talk "so strangely?"

Thus called upon, Mr. Pemberton thought it incumbent upon him to inter- fere—"*Courtney*, I think, Madam, your "name is! The daughter of an old friend "of mine, if I am not mistaken, and "who, I remember, was, when a very "young lady, a great admirer of *Roman* "*virtues*."

"Not of *Roman virtues*, I believe, Sir; "they had in them too much of the de- "structive spirit which Mrs. Melmoth "thinks so admirable."

"Indeed,

"Indeed, I ſaid nothing about *Roman* "*virtues*, nor do I trouble myſelf with "ſuch ſubjects—I merely admired the "ſoldiers becauſe they are ſo brave and "ſo polite; beſides, the military dreſs is "ſo very elegant and becoming—Dear, "Mr. Pemberton, how charmingly you "muſt look in your regimentals!"

Mr. Pemberton, bowing in return to the compliment, made an animated eulogium on the taſte and beauty of the ſpeaker.

"Pray, Sir," reſumed ſhe, addreſſing herſelf to Mr. Harley, whoſe inattention ſeemed to pique her, and whoſe notice ſhe was determined to attract, "are you of "Miſs Courtney's opinion——do you "think it right to call ſoldiers *mur-* "*derers?*"

"Upon my word, Madam," with an air of irony, "you muſt excuſe me from "entering into ſuch *nice diſtinctions*— "when *ladies* differ, who ſhall preſume "to decide?"

Mr. Melmoth interpoſed, by wiſhing, "that they had ſome thouſands more of "theſe

"theſe *murderers* in the Weſt Indies, to "keep the ſlaves in ſubordination, who, "ſince abſurd notions of liberty had been "put into their heads, were grown very "troubleſome and refractory, and, in a "ſhort time, he ſuppoſed, would become "as inſolent as the Engliſh ſervants."

"Would you believe it, Mrs. Den-"beigh," ſaid the Planter's lady, addreſ-ſing the ſiſter of her huſband, "Mr. "Melmoth and I have been in England "but a month, and have been obliged "three times to change our whole ſuit of "ſervants?"

"This is a land of freedom, my dear "ſiſter; ſervants, here, will not ſubmit "to be treated like the ſlaves in Ja-"maica."

"Well, I am ſure it is very provoking "to have one's will diſputed by ſuch low, "ignorant, creatures. How ſhould they "know what is right? It is enough for "them to obey the orders of their ſupe-"riors."

"But

"But ſuppoſe," replied Mrs. Denbeigh, "they ſhould happen to think "their ſuperiors unreaſonable!"

"*Think!* ſiſter," ſaid the lordly Mr. Melmoth, with an exulting laugh, "what "have *ſervants*, or *women*, to do with "*thinking?*"

"Nay, now," interrupted Mr. Pemberton, you are too ſevere upon the ladies— "how would the elegant and taſteful ar- "rangement of Mrs. Melmoth's orna- "ments have been produced without "thinking?"

"Oh, you flatterer!" ſaid the lady. "Let them think only about their dreſs, "and I have no objection, but don't let "them plague us with *ſermonizing*."

"Mrs. Melmoth," ſaid I, coolly, "does not often, I dare ſay, offend *in* "*this way*. That ſome of the gentle- "men, preſent, ſhould object to a wo- "man's exerciſing her diſcriminating "powers, is not wonderful, ſince it might "operate greatly to their diſadvantage."

"A blow on the right cheek, from ſo "fair a hand," replied Mr. Pemberton, affectedly

affectedly bending his body, "would al-
"moſt induce one to adopt the chriſtian
"maxim, and turn the left, alſo. What
"ſay you, Mr. Harley?"

"Mr. Harley, I believe, Sir, does not
"feel himſelf included in the reflection."

"He is a happy man then."

"No, Sir, merely a *rational one!*"

"You are pleaſed to be ſevere; of all
"things I dread a female wit."

"It is an inſtinctive feeling of ſelf-pre-
"ſervation—nature provides weak ani-
"mals with timidity as a guard."

Mr. Pemberton reddened, and, affecting a careleſs air, hummed a tune. Mr. Melmoth again reverted to the ſubject of Engliſh ſervants, which gave riſe to a diſcuſſion on the Slave Trade. Mr. Harley pleaded the cauſe of freedom and humanity with a bold and manly eloquence, expatiating warmly on the iniquity as well as impolicy of ſo accurſed a traffic. Melmoth was awed into ſilence. Mr. Pemberton advanced ſome trite arguments in oppoſition, reſpecting the temporary miſchiefs which might enſue, in caſe of an abolition,

abolition, to the planters, landholders, traders, &c. Auguſtus explained, by contending only for the gradual emancipation, after their minds had been previouſly prepared, of the oppreſſed Africans. The converſation grew intereſting. Pemberton was not devoid of talents when he laid aſide his affectation; the ſubject was examined both in a moral and a political point of view. I liſtened with delight, while Auguſtus expoſed and confuted the ſpecious reaſoning and ſophiſtry of his antagoniſt: exulting in the triumph of truth and juſtice, I ſecretly gloried—'with more than ſelfiſh vanity'—in the virtue and abilities of my friend. Though driven from all his reſources, Mr. Pemberton was too much the courtier to be eaſily diſconcerted, but, complimenting his adverſary on his eloquence, declared he ſhould be happy to hear of his having a ſeat in Parliament.

Mrs. Melmoth, who had yawned and betrayed various ſymptoms of wearineſs during the diſcuſſion, now propoſed the adjournment of the ladies into the drawing-

ing-room, whither I was compelled, by a barbarous and odious cuſtom, reluctantly to follow, and to ſubmit to be entertained with a torrent of folly and impertinence.

"I was ill-natured," ſhe told me.—"How could I be ſo ſevere upon the *charming* and *elegant* Mr. Pemberton?"

It was in vain I laboured to convince her, that to be treated like *ideots* was no real compliment; and that the men who condeſcend to flatter our foibles, deſpiſed the weak beings they helped to form.

My remonſtrances were as fatiguing, and as little to be comprehended by this *fine lady*, as the arguments reſpecting the Slave Trade:—ſhe ſought refuge from them in interrogating Mrs. Denbeigh reſpecting the laſt new faſhions, and in conſulting her taſte on the important queſtion—whether blue or violet colour was the moſt becoming to a brunette complexion? The gentlemen joined us, to our great relief, at the tea-table:—other company dropped in, and the evening was beguiled with cards and the cheſs-board;—at the latter Mr. Melmoth and Mr. Harley

Harley were antagoniſts;—the former was no match for Auguſtus. I amuſed myſelf by obſerving their moves, and overlooking the game.

During our return from this viſit, ſome converſation occurred between Mr. Harley, my couſin, and myſelf, reſpecting the company we had quitted. I expreſſed my diſappointment, diſguſt, and contempt, in terms, it may be, a little too ſtrong.

"I was *faſtidious*," Auguſtus told me, "I wanted a world made on purpoſe for me, and beings formed after one model. It was both amuſing, and inſtructive, to contemplate varieties of character. I was a romantic enthuſiaſt—and ſhould endeavour to become more like an inhabitant of the world."

Piqued at theſe remarks, and at the tone and manner in which they were uttered, I felt my temper riſing, and replied with warmth; but it was the glow of a moment; for, to ſay truth, vexation and diſappointment, rather than reaſon, had broken and ſubdued my ſpirit. Mrs. Denbeigh,

Denbeigh, perceiving I was pained, kindly endeavoured to give a turn to the converſation; yet ſhe could not help expreſſing her regret, on obſerving the folly, levity, and extravagance, of the woman whom her brother had choſen for a wife.

"No doubt," ſaid Auguſtus, a little peeviſhly, "he is fond of her—ſhe is a "fine woman—there is no accounting "for the *caprices* of the affections."

I ſighed, and my eyes filled with tears —"Is, then, affection ſo *capricious* a ſen-"timent—is it poſſible to love what we "deſpiſe?"

"I cannot tell," retorted Mr. Harley, with quickneſs. "Triflers can give no "*ſerious* occaſion for uneaſineſs:—the "humours of ſuperior women are ſome-"times ſtill leſs tolerable."

"Ah! how unjuſt. If gentleneſs be "not *the perfection of reaſon*, it is a quality "which I have never, yet, properly un-"derſtood."

He made no reply, but ſunk into ſilence, reſerve, and reverie. On our arrival at my apartments, I ventured (my couſin

couſin having left us) to expoſtulate with him on his unkind behaviour; but was anſwered with ſeverity. Some retroſpection enſued, which gradually led to the ſubject ever preſent to my thoughts.—Again I expreſſed a ſolicitude to be informed of the real ſtate of his heart, of the nature of thoſe myſterious obſtacles, to which, when clearly aſcertained, I was ready to ſubmit.—"Had he, or had he not, an attachment, that looked to, as its *end*, a ſerious and legal engagement?" He appeared ruffled and diſcompoſed.—"I ought not to be ſo urgent—he had already ſufficiently explained himſelf." He then repeated to me ſome particulars, apparently adverſe to ſuch a ſuppoſition—aſking me, in his turn, "If theſe circumſtances beſpoke his having any ſuch event in view?"

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

FOR ſome time after this he abſented himſelf from me; and, when he returned, his manners were ſtill more unequal; even his ſentiments, and principles, at times, appeared to me equivocal, and his character ſeemed wholly changed. I tried, in vain, to accommodate myſelf to a diſpoſition ſo various. My affection, my ſenſibility, my fear of offending—a thouſand conflicting, torturing, emotions, threw a conſtraint over my behaviour.—My ſituation became abſolutely intolerable—time was murdered, activity vain, virtue inefficient: yet, a ſecret hope inſpired me, that *indifference* could not have produced the irritations, the inequalities, that thus harraſſed me. I thought, I obſerved a conflict in his mind; his fits of abſence, and reflection, were unuſual, deep, and frequent: I watched them with anxiety, with terror, with breathleſs expectation. My health became affected,

and

and my mind diſordered. I perceived that it was impoſſible to proceed, in the manner we had hitherto done, much longer—I felt that it would, inevitably, deſtroy me.

I reflected, meditated, reaſoned, with myſelf—'That one channel, into which my thoughts were inceſſantly impelled, was deſtructive of all order, of all connection.' New projects occurred to me, which I had never before ventured to encourage—I revolved them in my mind, examined them in every point of view, weighed their advantages and diſadvantages, in a moral, in a prudential, ſcale.—Threatening evils appeared on all ſides—I endeavoured, at once, to free my mind from prejudice, and from paſſion; and, in the critical and *ſingular* circumſtances in which I had placed myſelf, coolly to ſurvey the ſeveral arguments of the caſe, and nicely to calculate their force and importance.

"If, as we are taught to believe, the benevolent Author of nature be, indeed, benevolent," ſaid I, to myſelf, "he ſurely

muſt have intended the *happineſs* of his creatures. Our morality cannot extend to him, but muſt conſiſt in the knowledge, and practice, of thoſe duties which we owe to ourſelves and to each other.—Individual happineſs conſtitutes the general good:——*happineſs* is the only true *end* of exiſtence;—all notions of morals, founded on any other principle, involve in themſelves a contradiction, and muſt be erroneous. Man does right, when purſuing intereſt and pleaſure—it argues no depravity—this is the fable of ſuperſtition: he ought only to be careful, that, in ſeeking his own good, he does not render it incompatible with the good of others—that he does not conſider himſelf as ſtanding alone in the univerſe. The infraction of eſtabliſhed *rules* may, it is poſſible, in ſome caſes, be productive of miſchief; yet, it is difficult to ſtate any *rule* ſo preciſe and determinate, as to be alike applicable to every ſituation: what, in one inſtance, might be a *vice*, in another may poſſibly become a *virtue*:—a thouſand imperceptible, evaneſcent, ſhadings,

ings, modify every thought, every motive, every action, of our lives—no one can eſtimate the ſenſations of, can form an exact judgment for, another.

"I have ſometimes ſuſpected, that all mankind are purſuing phantoms, however dignified by different appellations.—The healing operations of time, had I patience to wait the experiment, might, perhaps, recover my mind from its preſent diſtempered ſtate; but, in the meanwhile, the bloom of youth is fading, and the vigour of life running to waſte.——Should I, at length, awake from a deluſive viſion, it would be only to find myſelf a comfortleſs, ſolitary, ſhivering, wanderer, in the dreary wilderneſs of human ſociety. I feel in myſelf the capacities for increaſing the happineſs, and the improvement, of a few individuals—and this circle, ſpreading wider and wider, would operate towards the grand end of life—*general utility*."

Again I repeated to myſelf—"Aſcetic virtues are equally barbarous as vain;—the only juſt morals, are thoſe which have

a tendency to increaſe the bulk of enjoyment. My plan tends to this. The good which I ſeek does not appear to me to involve injury to any one—it is of a nature, adapted to the diſpoſition of my mind, for which every event of my life, the education both of deſign and accident, have fitted me. If I am now put out, I may, perhaps, do miſchief:—the placid ſtream, forced from its channel, lays waſte the meadow. I ſeem to ſtand as upon a wide plain, bounded on all ſides by the horizon:—among the objects which I perceive within theſe limits, ſome are ſo lofty, my eyes ache to look up to them; others ſo low, I diſdain to ſtoop for them. *One*, only, ſeems fitted to my powers, and to my wiſhes——*one*, *alone*, engages my attention! Is not its poſſeſſion worthy an arduous effort? *Perſeverance* can turn the courſe of rivers, and level mountains! Shall I, then, relinquiſh my efforts, when, perhaps, on the very verge of ſucceſs?

"The mind muſt have an object:—ſhould I deſiſt from my preſent purſuit, after

after all it has coſt me, for what can I change it? I feel, that I am neither a philoſopher, nor a heroine—but a *woman, to whom education has given a ſexual character.* It is true, I have riſen ſuperior to the generality of my *oppreſſed ſex*; yet, I have neither the talents for a legiſlator, nor for a reformer, of the world. I have ſtill many female foibles, and ſhrinking delicacies, that unfit me for riſing to arduous heights. Ambition cannot ſtimulate me, and to accumulate wealth, I am ſtill leſs fitted. Should I, then, do violence to my heart, and compel it to reſign its hopes and expectations, what can preſerve me from ſinking into, the moſt abhorred of all ſtates, *languor and inanity?* —Alas! that tender and faithful heart refuſes to change its object—it can never love another. Like Rouſſeau's Julia, my ſtrong individual attachment has annihilated every man in the creation:—him I love appears, in my eyes, ſomething more —every other, ſomething leſs.

"I have laboured to improve myſelf, that I might be worthy of the ſituation I

have choſen. I would unite myſelf to a man of worth—I would have our mingled virtues and talents perpetuated in our offspring—I would experience thoſe ſweet ſenſations, of which nature has formed my heart ſo exquiſitely ſuſceptible. My ardent ſenſibilities incite me to love—to ſeek to inſpire ſympathy—to be beloved! My heart obſtinately refuſes to renounce the man, to whoſe mind my own ſeems akin! From the centre of private affections, it will at length embrace—like ſpreading circles on the peaceful boſom of the ſmooth and expanded lake—the whole ſenſitive and rational creation. Is it virtue, then, to combat, or to yield to, my paſſions?"

I conſidered, and reconſidered, theſe reaſonings, ſo ſpecious, ſo flattering, to which paſſion lent its force. One moment, my mind ſeemed firmly made up on the part I had to act;—I perſuaded myſelf, that I had gone too far to recede, and that there remained for me no alternative:—the next inſtant, I ſhrunk, gaſping,

ing,

ing, from my own reſolves, and ſhudder-ed at the important conſequences which they involved. Amidſt a variety of perturbations, of conflicting emotions, I, at length, once more, took up my pen.

CHAP. VII.

TO AUGUSTUS HARLEY.

"I BLUSH, when I reflect what a weak, wavering, inconſiſtent, being, I muſt lately have appeared to you. I write to you on important ſubjects—I forbid you to anſwer me on paper; and, when you ſeem inclined to put that period to the preſent, painful, high-wrought, and trying, ſtate of my feelings, which is now become ſo neceſſary, I appear neither to hear, nor to comprehend you. I fly from the ſubject, and thicken the cloud of myſtery, of which I have ſo often,

and, I ſtill think, ſo juſtly complained.—These are ſome of the effects of the contradictory ſyſtems, that have ſo long bewildered our principles and conduct. A combination of cauſes, added to the conflict between a thouſand delicate and nameleſs emotions, have lately conſpired to confuſe, to weaken, my ſpirits. You can conceive, that theſe acute, mental, ſenſations, muſt have had a temporary effect on the ſtate of my health. To ſay truth (and, had I not ſaid it, my countenance would have betrayed me), I have not, for ſome time paſt, been ſo thoroughly diſordered.

"Once more, I have determined to rally my ſtrength; for I feel, that a much longer continuance in the ſituation, in which my mind has been lately involved, would be inſupportable:—and I call upon you, *now*, with a reſolution to ſummon all my fortitude to bear the reſult, for the *written* ſtate of your mind, on the topic become ſo important to my future welfare and uſefulneſs.

"You

"You may ſuppoſe, that a mind like mine muſt have, repeatedly, ſet itſelf to examine, on every ſide, all that could poſſibly have a relation to a ſubject affecting it ſo materially. You have hinted at *myſterious* obſtacles to the wiſh, in which every faculty of my ſoul has been ſo long abſorbed—the wiſh of forming with you, a connection, nearer, *and more tender*, than that of friendſhip. This myſtery, by leaving room for conjecture (and how frequently have I warned you of this!), left room for the illuſions of imagination, and of hope—left room for the ſuſpicion, that you might, poſſibly, be ſacrificing *your own feelings*, as well as mine, to a miſtaken principle. Is it poſſible that you were not aware of this—you, who are not unacquainted with the nature of mind! Still leſs were you ignorant of the nature of my mind—which I had ſo explicitly, ſo unreſervedly, laid open! I had a double claim upon your confidence—a confidence, that I was utterly incapable of abuſing, or betraying—a confidence, which muſt have ſtopped

my mind in its career—which would have ſaved me the bitter, agonizing, pangs I have ſuſtained. Mine were not common feelings—It is *obſcurity* and *myſtery* which has wrought them up to frenzy—*truth* and *certainty* would, long ere this, have cauſed them temperately to ſubſide into their accuſtomed channels. You underſtand little of the human heart, if you cannot conceive this—'Where the imagination is vivid, the feelings ſtrong, the views and deſires not bounded by common rules;—in ſuch minds, paſſions, if not ſubdued, become ungovernable and fatal: where there is much warmth, much enthuſiaſm, there is much danger.—My mind is no leſs ardent than yours, though education and habit may have given it a different turn—it glows with equal zeal to attain its end.'* Yes, I muſt continue to repeat, there has been in your conduct *one grand miſtake*; and the train of conſequences which may, yet, enſue, are uncertain, and threatening.—

* Holcroft's Anna St. Ives.

But,

But, I mean no reproach——we are all liable to errors; and my own, I feel, are many, and various. But to return——

"You may ſuppoſe I have revolved, in my thoughts, every poſſible difficulty on the ſubject alluded to; balancing their degrees of probability and force:—and, I will frankly confeſs, ſuch is the ſanguine ardour of my temper, that I can conceive but one obſtacle, that would be *abſolutely invincible*; which is, ſuppoſing that you have already contracted a *legal, irrevocable*, engagement. Yet, this I do not ſuppoſe. I will arrange, under five heads, (on all occaſions, I love to claſs and methodize) every other poſſible ſpecies of objection, and ſubjoin all the reaſonings which have occurred to me on the ſubjects.

"And, firſt, I will imagine, as the moſt ſerious and threatening difficulty, that you love another. I would, then, aſk—Is ſhe capable of eſtimating your worth—does ſhe love you—has ſhe the magnanimity to tell you ſo—would ſhe

ſacrifice to that affection every meaner conſideration—has ſhe merit to ſecure, as well as accompliſhments to attract, your regard?——You are too well acquainted with the human heart, not to be aware, that what is commonly called love is of a fleeting nature, kept alive only by hopes and fears, if the qualities upon which it is founded afford no baſis for its ſubſiding into tender confidence, and rational eſteem. Beauty may inſpire a tranſient deſire, vivacity amuſe, for a time, by its ſportive graces; but the firſt will quickly fade and grow familiar—the laſt degenerate into impertinence and inſipidity. Interrogate your own heart—Would you not, when the ardour of the paſſions, and the fervor of the imagination, ſubſided, wiſh to find the ſenſible, intelligent, friend, take place of the engaging miſtreſs?—Would you not expect the economical manager of your affairs, the rational and judicious mother to your offspring, the faithful ſharer of your cares, the firm friend to your intereſt, the tender conſoler of your ſorrows, the companion in whom

whom you could wholly confide, the diſcerning participator of your nobler purſuits, the friend of your virtues, your talents, your reputation—who could underſtand you, who was formed to paſs the ordeal of honour, virtue, friendſhip?—Aſk yourſelf theſe queſtions—aſk them cloſely, without ſophiſtry, and without evaſion. You are not, now, an infatuated boy! Suppoſing, then, that you are, at preſent, entangled in an engagement which anſwers not this deſcription—Is it virtue to fulfil, or to renounce, it? Contraſt with it my affection, with its probable conſequences, and weigh our different claims! *Would you have been the ſelected choice, of this woman, from all mankind*—would no other be capable of making her equally happy—would nothing compenſate to her for your loſs—are you the only object that ſhe beholds in creation—might not another engagement ſuit her equally well, or better—is her whole ſoul abſorbed but by one ſentiment, that of fervent love for you—is her future uſefulneſs, as well as peace, at ſtake—does ſhe

underſtand your high qualities better than myſelf—will ſhe emulate them more?—Does the engagement promiſe a favourable iſſue, or does it threaten to wear away the beſt period of life in protracted and uncertain feeling—*the moſt pernicious, and deſtructive, of all ſtates of mind?* Remember, alſo, that the ſummer of life will quickly fade; and that he who has reached the ſummit of the hill, has no time to loſe—if he ſeize not the preſent moment, age is approaching, and life melting faſt away.—I quit this, to ſtate my ſecond hypotheſis—

"That you eſteem and reſpect me, but that your heart has hitherto refuſed the ſympathies I have ſought to awaken in it. If this be the caſe, it remains to ſearch for the reaſon; and, I own, I am at a loſs to find it, either in moral, or phyſical, cauſes. Our principles are in uniſon, our taſtes and habits not diſſimilar, our knowledge of, and confidence in, each other's virtues is reciprocal, tried, and eſtabliſhed—our ages, perſonal accompliſhments, and mental acquirements do

not

not materially differ. From ſuch an union, I conceive, mutual advantages would reſult. I have found myſelf diſtinguiſhed, eſteemed, beloved, by others, where I have not ſought for this diſtinction. How, then, can I believe it compatible with the nature of mind, that ſo many ſtrong efforts, and reiterated impreſſions, can have produced no effect upon yours? Is your heart conſtituted differently from every other human heart? —I have lately obſerved an inequality in your behaviour, that has whiſpered ſomething flattering to my heart. Examine yourſelf—Have you felt no peculiar intereſt in what concerns me—would the idea of our ſeparation affect you with no more than a ſlight and common emotion?—— One more queſtion propoſe to yourſelf, as a teſt—Could you ſee me form a new, and a more fortunate, attachment, with indifference? If you cannot, without heſitation, anſwer theſe queſtions, I have ſtill a powerful pleader in your boſom, though unconſcious of it yourſelf, that will, ultimately, prevail. If I have, yet,

failed of producing an unequivocal effect, it muſt ariſe from having miſtaken the *means* proper to produce the deſired *end*. My own ſenſibility, and my imperfect knowledge of your character may, here, have combined to miſlead me. The firſt, by its ſuffocating and depreſſing powers, clouding my vivacity, incapacitating me from appearing to you with my natural advantages—theſe effects would diminiſh as aſſurance took place of doubt. The laſt, every day would contribute to correct. Permit me, then, *to hope for*, as well as to ſeek your affections, and if I do not, at length, gain and ſecure them, it will be a phenomenon in the hiſtory of mind!

"But to proceed to my third ſuppoſition—The peculiar, pecuniary, embarraſſments of your ſituation—Good God! did this barbarous, inſidious, relation, allow himſelf to conſider the pernicious conſequences of his abſurd bequeſt?—threatening to undermine every manly principle, to blaſt every ſocial virtue! Oh! that I had the eloquence to rouſe

you

you from this tame and unworthy acquieſcence—to ſtimulate you to exerciſe your talents, to truſt to the independent energies of your mind, to exert yourſelf to procure the honeſt rewards of virtuous induſtry. In proportion as we lean for ſupport on foreign aid, we loſe the dignity of our nature, and palſey thoſe powers which conſtitute that nature's worth. Yet, I will allow, from my knowledge of your habits and aſſociations, this obſtacle its full force. But there remains one method of obviating, even this! I will frankly confeſs, that could I hope to gain the intereſt in your heart, which I have ſo long and ſo earneſtly ſought—my confidence in your honour and integrity, my tenderneſs for you, added to the wiſh of contributing to your happineſs, would effect, what no leſſer conſiderations could have effected—would triumph, not over my principles, *(for the individuality of an affection conſtitutes its chaſtity)* but over my prudence. I repeat, I am willing to ſacrifice every inferior conſideration—retain your legacy, ſo capriciouſly bequeathed

queathed—retain your preſent ſituation, and I will retain mine. This propoſition, though not a violation of modeſty, certainly involves in it very ſerious hazards—*It is, wholly, the triumph of affection!* You cannot ſuppoſe, that a tranſient engagement would ſatisfy a mind like mine; I ſhould require a reciprocal faith plighted and returned—an after ſeparation, otherwiſe than by mutual conſent, would be my deſtruction—I ſhould not ſurvive your deſertion. My exiſtence, then, would be in your hands. Yet, having once confided, your affection ſhould be my recompence—my ſacrifice ſhould be a cheerful and a voluntary one; I would determine not to harraſs you with doubts nor jealouſies, I would neither reflect upon the paſt, nor diſtruſt the future: I would reſt upon you, I would confide in you fearleſsly and entirely! but, though I would not enquire after the paſt, my delicacy would require the aſſurance of your preſent, undivided, affection.

"The fourth idea that has occurred to me, is the probability of your having formed

formed a plan of ſeeking ſome agreeable woman of fortune, who ſhould be willing to reward a man of merit for the injuſtice of ſociety. Whether you may already have experienced ſome diſappointments of this nature, I will not pretend to determine. I can conceive, that, by many women, a coxcomb might be preferred to you——however this may be, the plan is not unattended with riſque, nor with ſome poſſible degrading circumſtances—and you may ſucceed, and yet be miſerable: happineſs depends not upon the abundance of our poſſeſſions.

" The laſt caſe which I ſhall ſtate, and on which I ſhall lay little comparative ſtreſs, is the poſſibility of an engagement of a very inferior nature—a mere affair of the ſenſes. The arguments which might here be adduced are too obvious to be repeated. Beſides, I think highly of your refinement and delicacy—Having therefore juſt hinted, I leave it with you.

" And now to conclude—After conſidering all I have urged, you may, perhaps, reply—That the ſubject is too nice and

too

too ſubtle for reaſoning, and that the heart is not to be compelled. Theſe, I think, are miſtakes. There is no ſubject, in fact, that may not be ſubjected to the laws of inveſtigation and reaſoning. What is it that we deſire—*pleaſure*—*happineſs?* I allow, pleaſure is the ſupreme good: but it may be analyzed—it muſt have a ſtable foundation—to this analyſis I now call you! This is the critical moment, upon which hangs a long chain of events—This moment may decide your future deſtiny and mine—it may, even, affect that of unborn myriads! My ſpirit is pervaded with theſe important ideas—my heart flutters—I breathe with difficulty—*My friend—I would give myſelf to you*—the gift is not worthleſs. Pauſe a moment, ere you rudely throw from you an affection ſo tried, ſo reſpectable, ſo worthy of you! The heart may be compelled—compelled by the touching ſympathies which bind, with ſacred, indiſſoluble ties, mind to mind! Do not prepare for yourſelf future remorſe—when loſt, you may recollect my worth, and my affection,

fection, and remember them with regret—Yet miſtake me not, I have no intention to intimidate—I think it my duty to live, while I may poſſibly be uſeful to others, however bitter and oppreſſive may be that exiſtence. I will live *for duty*, though peace and enjoyment ſhould be for ever fled. You may rob me of my happineſs, you may rob me of my ſtrength, but, even, you cannot deſtroy my principles. And, if no other motive with-held me from raſh determinations, my tenderneſs for you (it is not a ſelfiſh tenderneſs), would prevent me from adding, to the anxieties I have already given you, the cruel pang, of feeling yourſelf the occaſion, however unintentionally, of the deſtruction of a fellow creature.

"While I await your anſwer, I ſummon to my heart all its remaining ſtrength and ſpirits. Say to me, in clear and deciſive terms, that the obſtacles which oppoſe my affection *are abſolutely, and altogether, inſuperable*—Or that there is a poſſibility of their removal, but that time and patience are, yet, neceſſary to

determine

determine their force. In this caſe, I will not diſturb the future operations of your mind, aſſuring myſelf, that you will continue my ſuſpence no longer than is proper and requiſite—or frankly accept, and return, the faith of her to whom you are infinitely dearer than life itſelf!

"Early to-morrow morning, a meſſenger ſhall call for the paper, which is to decide the colour of my future deſtiny. Every moment, that the blow has been ſuſpended, it has acquired additional force—ſince it muſt, at length, deſcend, it would be weakneſs ſtill to deſire its protraction—We have, already, refined too much—*I promiſe to live—more, alas! I cannot promiſe.*

"*Farewel!* deareſt and moſt beloved of men—whatever may be my fate—*be happineſs yours!* Once more, my lingering, foreboding heart, repeats *farewel!*

"EMMA."

It would be unneceſſary to paint my feelings during the interval in which I waited a reply to this letter—I ſtruggled

to

to repreſs hope, and to prepare my mind for the diſſolution of a thouſand air-built fabrics. The day wore tediouſly away in ſtrong emotion, and ſtrong exertion. On the ſubſequent morning, I ſat, waiting the return of my meſſenger, in a ſtate of mind, difficult even to be conceived—I heard him enter—breathleſs, I flew to meet him—I held out my hand—I could not ſpeak.

"Mr. Harley deſired me to tell you, "*he had not had time to write.*"

Gracious God! I ſhudder, even now, to recall the convulſive ſenſation! I ſunk into a chair—I ſat for ſome time motionleſs, every faculty ſeemed ſuſpended. At length, returning to recollection, I wrote a ſhort incoherent note, entreating——

"To be ſpared another day, another night, like the preceding—I aſked only *one ſingle line!* In the morning I had made up my mind to fortitude—it was now ſinking—another day, I could not anſwer for the conſequences."

Again an interval of ſuſpenſe—again my meſſenger returned with a verbal reply

ply—" *He would write to-morrow.*" Unconſciouſly, I exclaimed—" *Barbarous, unfeeling, unpitying, man!*" A burſt of tears relieved—no—*it did not relieve me.* The day paſſed—I know not how—I dare not recollect.

The next morning, I aroſe, ſomewhat refreſhed; my exhauſted ſtrength and ſpirits had procured me a few hours of profound ſlumber. A degree of reſentment gave a temporary firmneſs to my nerves. " What happineſs (I repeated to myſelf) could I have expected with a man, thus regardleſs of my feelings?" I compoſed my ſpirits—*hope was at an end*—into a ſort of ſullen reſignation to my fate—a half ſtupor!

At noon the letter arrived, coldly, confuſedly written; methought there appeared even a degree of irritation in it.

" *Another, a prior attachment*—His behaviour had been ſuch, as neceſſarily reſulted from ſuch an engagement--unavoidble circumſtances had prevented an earlier reply." My ſwollen heart—but it is enough—" He blamed my impatience—

he

he would in future, perhaps, when my mind had attained more compoſure, make ſome remarks on my letter."

CHAP. VIII.

TO write had always afforded a temporary relief to my ſpirits—The next day I reſumed my pen.

TO AUGUSTUS HARLEY.

"IF, after reflecting upon, and comparing, many parts of your paſt conduct, you can acquit yourſelf, at the ſacred bar of humanity—it is well! How often have I called for—urged, with all the energy of truth and feeling—but in vain—ſuch a letter as you have at length written—and, *even, now*, though ſomewhat late, I thank you for it. Yet, what could have been eaſier, than to repeat ſo plain and ſo ſimple a tale? The vague hints, you had before given, I had repeatedly declared to be inſufficient. Remember, all my earneſtneſs, and all my ſimplicity,

and *learn the value of ſincerity!* 'Oh! with what difficulty is an active mind, once forced into any particular train, perſuaded to deſert it as hopeleſs!' *

"This recital, then, was not to be confirmed, till the whole moral conformation of my mind was affected—till the barbed arrow had fixed, and rankled in, and poiſoned, with its envenomed point, every vein, every fibre, of my heart. This, I confeſs, is now the caſe—Reaſon and ſelf-reſpect ſuſtain me—but the wound you have inflicted *is indelible*—it will continue to be the corroding canker at the root of my peace. My youth has been worn in anguiſh—and the ſummer of life will probably be overſhadowed by a ſtill thicker and darker cloud. But I mean not to reproach you—it is not given me to contribute to your happineſs—the deareſt and moſt ardent wiſh of my ſoul—I would not then inflict unneceſſary pain—yet, I would fix upon your mind, the value of *unequivocal ſincerity*.

"Had the happineſs of any human being, the meaneſt, the vileſt, depended

* Godwin's Caleb Williams.

as

as much upon me, as mine has done upon you, I would have ſacrificed, for their relief, the deareſt ſecret of my heart—the ſecret, even upon which my very exiſtence had depended. It is true, you did not directly deceive me—but is that enough for the delicacy of humanity? May the paſt be an affecting leſſon to us both—it is written upon my mind in characters of blood. I feel, and acknowledge, my own errors, in yielding to the illuſion of vague, viſionary, expectation; but my faults have originated in a generous ſource—they have been the wild, ardent, fervent, exceſſes, of a vigorous and an exalted mind!

"I checked my tears, as they flowed, and they are already dried—uncalled, unwiſhed, for—why do they, thus, ſtruggle to force their way? my mind has, I hope, too much energy, utterly to ſink—I know what it is to ſuffer, and to combat with, if not to ſubdue, my feelings—and *certainty*, itſelf, is ſome relief. I am, alſo, ſupported by the retroſpect of my conduct; with all its miſtakes, and all its extravagances, it has

been that of a virtuous, ingenuous, uncorrupted, mind. You have contemned a heart of no common value, you have ſported with its exquiſite ſenſibilities—but it will, ſtill, know how to ſeparate your virtues from your errors.

"You reprove, perhaps juſtly, my impatience—I can only ſay, that circumſtanced as you were, I ſhould have ſtolen an hour from reſt, from company, from buſineſs, however important, to have relieved and ſoothed a fellow-creature in a ſituation, ſo full of pain and peril. Every thought, during a day ſcarcely to be recollected without agony, *was a two-edged ſword*—but ſome hours of profound and refreſhing ſlumber recruited my exhauſted ſpirits, and enabled me, yeſterday, to receive my fate, with a fortitude but little hoped for.

"You would oblige me exceedingly by the remarks you allow me to hope for, on my letter of the ——th. You know, I will not ſhrink from reproof—that letter afforded you the laſt proof of my affection, and I repent not of it. I loved you,

you, firſt, for what, I conceived, high qualities of mind—from nature and aſſociation, my tenderneſs became perſonal—till at length, I loved you, not only rationally and tenderly—*but paſſionately*—it became a pervading and a devouring fire! And, yet, I do not bluſh—my affection was modeſt, if intemperate, *for it was individual*—it annihilated in my eyes every other man in the creation. I regret theſe natural ſenſations and affections, their forcible ſuppreſſion injures the mind—it converts the mild current of gentle, and genial ſympathies, into a deſtructive torrent. This, I have the courage to avow it, has been one of the miſerable miſtakes in morals, and, like all other partial remedies, has increaſed the evil, it was intended to correct. From monaſtic inſtitutions and principles have flowed, as from a polluted ſource, ſtreams, that have at once ſpread through ſociety a mingled contagion of diſſoluteneſs and hypocriſy.

"You have ſuddenly arreſted my affections in their full career—in all their

glowing effervescence—you have taken

'The rose
'From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
'And placed a blister there.'

"And, yet, I survive the shock, and determine to live, not for future enjoyment—that is now, for ever, past—*but for future usefulness*—Is not this virtue?

"I am sorry your attachment has been, and I fear is likely to be, protracted—I know, too well, the misery of these situations, and I should, now, feel a melancholy satisfaction in hearing of its completion—In that completion, may you experience no disappointment! I do not wish you to be beloved, as I have loved you; this, perhaps, is unnecessary; such an affection, infallibly, enslaves the heart that cherishes it; and slavery is the tomb of virtue and of peace.

"I believe it would not be proper for us to meet again—at least at present—should I hear of sickness, or calamity, befalling you, I shall, I suspect, be impelled, by an irresistible impulse to seek

you

you—but I will no more interrupt your repoſe—Though you have contemned my affection, my friendſhip will ſtill follow you.

" If you really *love*, I think you ought to make ſome ſacrifices, and not render yourſelf, and the happy object of your tenderneſs, the victims of factitious notions.—Remember—youth and life will quickly fade. Relinquiſh, call upon her to relinquiſh, her prejudices—ſhould ſhe refuſe, ſhe is unworthy of you, and you will regret, too late, the tender, faithful, ingenuous, heart, that you have pierced through and through—*that you have almoſt broken!* Should ſhe make you happy, I will eſteem, though I may never have an opportunity of thanking, her—Were ſhe informed of my conduct, ſhe might rejoice in the trial of your affection—though I ſhould not.

" The ſpirits, that had crouded round my heart, are already ſubſiding—a flood of ſoftneſs, a tide of overwhelming reflection, guſhes upon it—and I feel ſinking into helpleſs, infantine, diſtreſs!

Haſten to me your promiſed remarks—they will rouſe, they will ſtrengthen, me. —*Truth* I will never call either indelicate or inhuman—it is only the virtuous mind can dare to practiſe, to challenge, it:—ſimplicity is true refinement.

"Let us reap from the paſt all the good we can—a cloſe, and ſearching, knowledge of the ſecret ſprings and foldings of our hearts. Methinks, I could wiſh you juſtified, *even at my own expence.* —I aſk, unſhrinking, a frank return.

"A heart-rending ſigh accompanies my *farewel*—the laſt ſtruggles of expiring nature will be far leſs painful—but my philoſophy, now, *ſternly* calls upon me to put its precepts in practice——trembling—ſhuddering—I obey!

"*Farewel!*

"EMMA."

Perhaps it coſt me ſome efforts to make the preceding letter ſo moderate—yet, every victory gained over ourſelves is attended with advantages. But this apparent calm was the lethargy of deſpair—

ſpair——it was ſucceeded by ſeverer conflicts, by keener anguiſh. A week paſſed, and near a ſecond—I received no anſwer.

CHAP. IX.

A LETTER from the country made it neceſſary for me, again, to addreſs Mr. Harley, to make ſome enquiries which reſpected buſineſs of his mother's. It may be, that I felt a mixture of other motives;——it is certain, that when I wrote, I ſpoke of more than buſineſs.

"I had hoped," I told him, "ere this, to have received the promiſed letter—Yet, I do not take up my pen," ſaid I, "either to complain of, or to importune, you. If I have already expreſſed myſelf with bitterneſs, let the harraſſed ſtate of my mind be my excuſe. My own con-

duct has been too erroneous, too eccentric, to enable me to judge impartially of your's. Forgive me, if, by placing you in an embarraſſed ſituation, I have expoſed you to conſequent miſtake or uneaſineſs. I feel, that whatever errors we may either of us have committed, *originated only with myſelf*, and I am content to ſuffer all the conſequences. It is true, had you repoſed in me an early, generous, confidence, much miſery would have been avoided—I had not been wounded

'There, where the human heart moſt exquiſitely feels!'

"You had been ſtill my friend, and I had been comparatively happy. Every paſſion is, in a great meaſure, the growth of indulgence: all our deſires are, in their commencement, eaſily ſuppreſſed, when there appears no probability of attaining their object; but when ſtrengthened, by time and reflection, into habit, in endeavouring to eradicate them, we tear away part of the mind. In my attachments there is a kind of ſavage tenacity—they

are

are of an elaſtic nature, and, being forced back, return with additional violence.

"My affection for you has not been, altogether, irrational or ſelfiſh. While I felt that I loved you, as no other woman, I was convinced, would love you—I conceived, could I once engage your heart, I could ſatisfy, and, even, purify it. While I loved your virtues, I thought I ſaw, and I lamented, the foibles which ſullied them. I ſuſpected you, perhaps erroneouſly, of pride, ambition, the love of diſtinction; yet your ambition could not, I thought, be of an ignoble nature—I feared that the gratifications you ſought, if, indeed, attainable, were factitious—I even fancied I perceived you, againſt your better judgment, labouring to ſeduce yourſelf!" "He is under a deluſion," ſaid I, to myſelf;—"reaſon may be ſtunned, or blinded, for awhile; but it will revive in the heart, and do its office, when ſophiſtry will be of no avail." "I ſaw you ſtruggling with vexations, that I was aſſured might be meliorated by tender confidence—I

longed to pour its balms into your boſom. My ſenſibility diſquieted you, and myſelf, only *becauſe it was conſtrained.* I thought I perceived a conflict in your mind—I watched its progreſs with attention and ſolicitude. A thouſand times has my fluttering heart yearned to break the cruel chains that fettered it, and to chace the cloud, which ſtole over your brow, by the tender, yet chaſte, careſſes and endearments of ineffable affection! My feelings became too high wrought, and altogether inſupportable. Sympathy for your ſituation, zeal for your virtues, love for your mind, tenderneſs for your perſon—a complication of generous, affecting, exquiſite, emotions, impelled me to make one great effort.—'*The world might call my plans abſurd, my views romantic, my pretenſions extravagant—Was I, or was I not, guilty of any crime, when, in the very acme of the paſſions, I ſo totally diſregarded the cuſtoms of the

* Holcroft's Anna St. Ives.

world?'

world?' Ah! what were my ſenſations —what did I not ſuffer, in the interval? —and you prolonged that cruel interval —and ſtill you ſuffer me to doubt, whether, at the moment in my life when I was actuated by the higheſt, the moſt fervent, the moſt magnanimous, principles—whether, at that moment when I moſt deſerved your reſpect, I did not for ever forfeit it.

"I ſeek not to extenuate any part of my conduct—I confeſs that it has been wild, extravagant, romantic—I confeſs, that, even for your errors, I am juſtly blameable—and yet I am unable to bear, becauſe I feel they would be unjuſt, your hatred and contempt. I cheriſh no reſentment—my ſpirit is ſubdued and broken—your unkindneſs ſinks into my ſoul.

"EMMA."

Another fortnight wore away in fruitleſs expectation—the morning roſe, the evening cloſed, upon me, in ſadneſs. I could not, yet, think the myſtery deve-

loped: on a concentrated view of the circumſtances, they appeared to me contradictory, and irreconcileable. A ſolitary enthuſiaſt, a child in the drama of the world, I had yet to learn, that thoſe who have courage to act upon advanced principles, muſt be content to ſuffer moral martyrdom.* In ſubduing our own prejudices, we have done little, while aſſailed on every ſide by the prejudices of others. My own heart acquitted me; but I dreaded that diſtortion of mind, that ſhould wreſt guilt out of the moſt ſublime of its emanations.

I ruminated, in gloomy ſilence, on my forlorn, and hopeleſs, ſituation. "If there be not a future ſtate of being," ſaid I to myſelf, "what is this!—Tortured in every ſtage of it, 'Man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down—he fleeth, as a ſhadow, and continueth not!'——I looked backward on my paſt life, and my

* This ſentiment may be juſt in ſome particular caſes, but it is by no means of general application, and muſt be underſtood with great limitations.

heart

heart ſickened—its confidence in humanity was ſhaken—I looked forward, and all was cheerleſs. I had certainly committed many errors!——Who has not—who, with a fancy as lively, feelings as acute, and a character as ſanguine, as mine?" 'What, in fact,' ſays a philoſophic writer,* 'is character?—the production of a lively and conſtant affection, and, conſequently, of a ſtrong paſſion:'—eradicate that paſſion, that ferment, that leaven, that exuberance, which raiſes and makes the mind what it is, and what remains? Yet, let us beware how we wantonly expend this divine, this invigorating, power. Every grand error, in a mind of energy, in its operation and conſequences, carries us years forward—*precious years, never to be recalled!*' I could find no ſubſtitute for the ſentiment I regretted—for that ſentiment formed my character; and, but for the obſtacles which gave it force, though I might have ſuffered leſs miſery, I ſhould, I ſuſpect, have gained

* Helvetius.

leſs

leſs improvement; ſtill adverſity *is a real evil*; and I foreboded that this improvement had been purchaſed too dear.

CHAP. X.

WEEKS elapſed ere the promiſed letter arrived—a letter ſtill colder, and more ſevere, than the former. I wept over it, bitter tears! It accuſed me "of adding to the vexations of a ſituation, before ſufficiently oppreſſive."—— Alas! had I known the nature of thoſe vexations, could I have merited ſuch a reproof? The Auguſtus, I had ſo long and ſo tenderly loved, no longer ſeemed to exiſt. Some one had, ſurely, uſurped his ſignature, and imitated thoſe characters, I had been accuſtomed to trace with delight. He tore himſelf from me, *nor would he deign to ſoften the pang of ſeparation.* Anguiſh overwhelmed me—my heart

heart was pierced. Reclining my head on my folded arms, I yielded myſelf up to ſilent grief. Alone, ſad, deſolate, no one heeded my ſorrows—no eye pitied me—no friendly voice cheered my wounded ſpirit! The ſocial propenſities of a mind forbidden to expand itſelf, forced back, preyed inceſſantly upon that mind, ſecretly conſuming its powers.

I was one day rouſed from theſe melancholy reflections by the entrance of my couſin, Mrs. Denbeigh. She held in her hand a letter, from my only remaining friend, Mrs. Harley. I ſnatched it haſtily; my heart, lacerated by the ſeeming unkindneſs of him in whom it had confided, yearned to imbibe the conſolation, which the gentle tenderneſs of this dear, maternal, friend, had never failed to adminiſter. The firſt paragraph informed me—

"That ſhe had, a few days ſince, received a letter from the perſon to whom the legacy of her ſon devolved, ſhould he fail in obſerving the preſcribed conditions of the teſtator: that this letter gave her notice,

notice, that thoſe conditions had already been infringed, Mr. Harley having contracted a marriage, three years before, with a foreigner, with whom he had become acquainted during his travels; that this marriage had been kept a ſecret, and, but very lately, by an accidental concurrence of circumſtances, revealed to the perſon moſt concerned in the detection. Undoubted proofs of the truth of this information could be produced; it would therefore be moſt prudent in her ſon to reſign his claims, without putting himſelf, and the legal heir, to unneceſſary expence and litigation. Ignorant of the reſidence of Mr. Harley, the writer troubled his mother to convey to him theſe particulars."

The paper dropped from my hand, the colour forſook my lips and cheeks;—yet I neither wept, nor fainted. Mrs. Denbeigh took my hands—they were frozen—the blood ſeemed congealed in my veins—and I ſat motionleſs—my faculties ſuſpended, ſtunned, locked up! My friend ſpake to me—embraced, ſhed tears over,

over, me—but ſhe could not excite mine; —my mind was pervaded by a ſenſe of confuſed miſery. I remained many days in this ſituation—it was a ſtate, of which I have but a feeble remembrance; and I, at length, awoke from it, as from a troubleſome dream.

With returning reaſon, the tide of recollection alſo returned. Oh! how complicated appeared to me the guilt of Auguſtus! Ignorant of his ſituation, I had been unconſciouſly, and perſeveringly, exerting myſelf to ſeduce the affections of a *huſband* from his *wife*. He had made me almoſt criminal in my own eyes—he had riſqued, at once, by a diſingenuous and cruel reſerve, the virtue and the happineſs of three beings. What is virtue, but a calculation of *the conſequences of our actions?* Did we allow ourſelves to reaſon on this principle, to reflect on its truth and importance, we ſhould be compelled to ſhudder at many parts of our conduct, which, *taken unconnectedly*, we have habituated ourſelves to conſider as almoſt indifferent. Virtue can exiſt

only

only in a mind capable of taking comprehenſive views. How criminal, then, is ignorance!

During this ſickneſs of the ſoul, Mr. Francis, who had occaſionally viſited me ſince my reſidence in town, called, repeatedly, to enquire after my welfare; expreſſing a friendly concern for my indiſpoſition. I ſaw him not—I was incapable of ſeeing any one—but, informed by my kind hoſteſs of his humane attentions, ſoothed by the idea of having yet a friend who ſeemed to intereſt himſelf in my concerns, I once more had recourſe to my pen (Mrs. Denbeigh having officiouſly placed the implements of writing in my way), and addreſſed him in the wild and incoherent language of deſpair.

TO MR. FRANCIS.

"You once told me, that I was incapable of heroiſm; and you were right—yet, I am called to great exertions! a blow that has been ſuſpended over my head, days, weeks, months, years, has at length fallen

fallen—ſtill I live! My tears flow—I ſtruggle, in vain, to ſuppreſs them, but they are not tears of blood!—My heart, though pierced through and through, is not broken!

"My friend, come and teach me how to acquire fortitude—I am wearied with miſery—All nature is to me a blank—an envenomed ſhaft rankles in my boſom—philoſophy will not heal the feſtering wound—*I am exquiſitely wretched!*

"Do not chide me till I get more ſtrength—I ſpeak to you of my ſorrows, for your kindneſs, while I was yet a ſtranger to you, inſpired me with confidence, and my deſolate heart looks round for ſupport.

"I am indebted to you—how ſhall I repay your goodneſs? Do you, indeed, intereſt yourſelf in my fate? Call upon me, then, for the few incidents of my life—I will relate them ſimply, and without diſguiſe. There is nothing uncommon in them, but the effect which they have produced upon my mind—yet, that mind they formed.

"After

"After all, my friend, what a wretched farce is life! Why cannot I ſleep, and, cloſe my eyes upon it for ever? But ſomething whiſpers, '*this would be wrong*.' —How ſhall I tear from my heart all its darling, cloſe-twiſted, aſſociations?—And muſt I live—*live for what?* God only knows! Yet, how am I ſure that there is a God—is he wiſe—is he powerful—is he benevolent? If he be, can he ſport himſelf in the miſeries of poor, feeble, impotent, beings, forced into exiſtence, without their choice—impelled, by the iron hand of neceſſity, through miſtake, into calamity?—Ah! my friend, who will condemn the poor ſolitary wanderer, whoſe feet are pierced with many a thorn, ſhould he turn ſuddenly out of the rugged path, ſeek an obſcure ſhade to ſhrowd his wounds, his ſorrows, and his indignation, from the ſcorn of a pitileſs world, and accelerate the hour of repoſe.* Who would be born if they could help it? You

* This is the reaſoning of a mind diſtorted by paſſion. Even in the moment of diſappointment, our heroine judged better. See page 69.

would

would perhaps—*you may do good*—But on me, the ſun ſhines only to mock my woes —Oh! that I had never ſeen the light.

" Torn by conflicting paſſions—waſted in anguiſh—life is melting faſt away—A burthen to myſelf, a grief to thoſe who love me, and worthleſs to every one. Weakened by long ſuſpence—preyed upon, by a combination of imperious feelings—I fear, I greatly fear, *the irrecoverable blow is ſtruck!* But I blame no one —I have been entangled in error—*who is faultleſs?*

" While pouring itſelf out on paper, my tortured mind has experienced a momentary relief: If your heart be inacceſſible to tender ſympathies, I have only been adding one more to my numberleſs miſtakes!

" EMMA."

Mr. Francis viſited me, and evinced for my ſituation the moſt humane and delicate conſideration. He reminded me of the offer I had made him, and requeſted the performance of my engagement.

ment. In compliance with this requeſt, and to beguile my melancholy thoughts, I drew up a ſketch of the events of my paſt life, and unfolded a hiſtory of the ſentiments of my mind (from which I have extracted the preceding materials) reſerving only any circumſtance which might lead to a detection of the name and family of the man with whom they were ſo intimately blended.

CHAP. XI.

AFTER having peruſed my manuſcript, Mr. Francis returned it, at my deſire, accompanied by the following letter.

TO EMMA COURTNEY.

"YOUR narrative leaves me full of admiration for your qualities, and compaſſion for your inſanity.

"I entreat

"I entreat however your attention to the following paſſage, extracted from your papers. 'After conſidering all I have urged, you may perhaps reply, that the ſubject is too nice, and too ſubtle, for reaſoning, and that the heart is not to be compelled. This, I think, is a miſtake. There is no topic, in fact, that may not be ſubjected to the laws of inveſtigation and reaſoning. What is it we deſire? pleaſure, happineſs. What! the pleaſure of an inſtant, only; or that which is more ſolid and permanent? I allow, pleaſure is the ſupreme good! but it may be analyſed. To this analyſis I now call you?'

"Could I, if I had ſtudied for years, invent a comment on your ſtory, more ſalutary to your ſorrows, more immoveable in its foundation, more clearly expreſſed, or more irreſiſtibly convincing to every rational mind?

"How few real, ſubſtantial, misfortunes there are in the world! how few calamities, the ſting of which does not depend upon our cheriſhing the viper in our boſom, and applying the aſpic to our

veins! The general purſuit of all men, we are frequently told, is happineſs. I have often been tempted to think, on the contrary, that the general purſuit is miſery. It is true, men do not recognize it by its genuine appellation; they content themſelves with the pitiful expedient of aſſigning it a new denomination. But, if their profeſſed purpoſe were miſery, could they be more ſkilful and ingenious in the purſuit?

"Look through your whole life. To ſpeak from your own deſcription, was there ever a life, to its preſent period, leſs chequered with ſubſtantial *bona fide* misfortune? The whole force of every thing which looks like a misfortune was aſſiduouſly, unintermittedly, provided by yourſelf. You nurſed in yourſelf a paſſion, which, taken in the degree in which you experienced it, is the unnatural and odious invention of a diſtempered civilization, and which in almoſt all inſtances generates an immenſe overbalance of excruciating miſery. Your conduct will ſcarcely admit of any other denomination than

than moon-ſtruck madneſs, hunting after torture. You addreſſed a man impenetrable as a rock, and the ſmalleſt glimpſe of ſober reflection, and common ſenſe, would have taught you inſtantly to have given up the purſuit.

"I know you will tell me, and you will tell yourſelf, a great deal about conſtitution, early aſſociation, and the indiſſoluble chain of habits and ſentiments. But I anſwer with ſmall fear of being erroneous, 'It is a miſtake to ſuppoſe, that the heart is not to be compelled. There is no topic, in fact, that may not be ſubjected to the laws of inveſtigation and reaſoning. Pleaſure, happineſs, is the ſupreme good; and happineſs is ſuſceptible of being analyſed.' I grant, that the ſtate of a human mind cannot be changed at once; but, had you worſhipped at the altar of reaſon but half as aſſiduouſly as you have ſacrificed at the ſhrine of illuſion, your preſent happineſs would have been as enviable, as your preſent diſtreſs is worthy of compaſſion. If men would but take the trouble to aſk themſelves, once

every day, Why ſhould I be miſerable? how many, to whom life is a burthen, would become chearful and contented.

" Make a catalogue of all the real evils of human life; bodily pain, compulſory ſolitude, ſevere corporal labour, in a word, all thoſe cauſes which deprive us of health, or the means of ſpending our time in animated, various, and rational purſuits. Aye, theſe are real evils! But I ſhould be aſhamed of putting diſappointed love into my enumeration. Evils of this ſort are the brood of folly begotten upon faſtidious indolence. They ſhrink into non-entity, when touched by the wand of truth.

" The firſt leſſon of enlightened reaſon, the great fountain of heroiſm and virtue, the principle by which alone man can become what man is capable of being, is *independence*. May every power that is favourable to integrity, to honour, defend me from leaning upon another for ſupport! I will uſe the world, I will uſe my fellow men, but I will not abuſe theſe invaluable benefits of the ſyſtem of nature. I will not be weak and criminal

nal enough, to make my peace depend upon the precarious thread of another's life or another's pleaſure. I will judge for myſelf; I will draw my ſupport from myſelf—the ſupport of my exiſtence and the ſupport of my happineſs. The ſyſtem of nature has perhaps made me dependent for the means of exiſtence and happineſs upon my fellow men taken collectively; but nothing but my own folly can make me dependent upon individuals. Will theſe principles prevent me from admiring, eſteeming, and loving ſuch as are worthy to excite theſe emotions? Can I not have a mind to underſtand, and a heart to feel excellence, without firſt parting with the faireſt attribute of my nature?

"You boaſt of your ſincerity and frankneſs. You have doubtleſs ſome reaſon for your boaſt—Yet all your misfortunes ſeem to have ariſen from concealment. You brooded over your emotions, and conſidered them as a ſacred depoſit—You have written to me, I have ſeen you frequently, during the whole of this

tranſaction, without ever having received the ſlighteſt hint of it, yet, if I be a fit counſellor now, I was a fit counſellor then; your folly was ſo groſs, that, if it had been expoſed to the light of day, it could not have ſubſiſted for a moment. Even now you ſuppreſs the name of your hero: yet, unleſs I know how much of a hero and a model of excellence he would appear in my eyes, I can be but a very imperfect judge of the affair.

"——— FRANCIS."

CHAP. XII.

TO the remonſtrance of my friend, which rouſed me from the languor into which I was ſinking, I immediately replied——

TO MR. FRANCIS.

"You retort upon me my own arguments, and you have cauſe. I felt a ray of conviction dart upon my mind, even, while I wrote them. But what then?—'I ſeemed to be in a ſtate, in which reaſon had no power; I felt as if I could coolly ſurvey the ſeveral arguments of the caſe—perceive, that they had prudence, truth, and common ſenſe on their ſide—And then anſwer—I am under the guidance of a director more energetic than you!'* I am affected by your kindneſs—I am affected by your letter. I could weep over it, bitter tears of conviction and remorſe. But argue with the wretch infected with the plague—will it ſtop the tide of blood, that is rapidly carrying its contagion to the heart? I bluſh! I ſhed burning tears! But I am ſtill deſolate and wretched! And how am I to help it? The force which you impute to my rea-

* Godwin's Caleb Williams.

ſoning was the powerful frenzy of a high delirium.

"What does it ſignify whether, abſtractedly conſidered, a misfortune be worthy of the names real and ſubſtantial, if the conſequences produced are the ſame? That which embitters all my life, that which ſtops the genial current of health and peace is, whatever be its nature, a real calamity to me. There is no end to this reaſoning—what individual can limit the deſires of another? The neceſſaries of the civilized man are whimſical ſuperfluities in the eye of the ſavage. Are we, or are we not (as you have taught me) the creatures of ſenſation and circumſtance?

"I agree with you—and the more I look into ſociety, the deeper I feel the ſoul-ſickening conviction—'The general purſuit is miſery'—neceſſarily—excruciating miſery, from the ſource to which you juſtly aſcribe it—'*The unnatural and odious inventions of a diſtempered civilization.*' I am content, you may perceive, to recognize things by their genuine appellation. I am, at leaſt, a reaſoning maniac:

niac: perhaps the moſt dangerous ſpecies of inſanity. But while the ſource continues troubled, why expect the ſtreams to run pure?

"You know I will tell you—'about the indiſſoluble chains of aſſociation and habit:' and you attack me again with my own weapons! Alas! while I confeſs their impotence, with what conſiſtency do I accuſe the flinty, impenetrable, heart, I ſo earneſtly ſought, in vain, to move? What materials does this ſtubborn mechaniſm of the mind offer to the wiſe and benevolent legiſlator!

"Had I, you tell me, 'worſhipped at the altar of reaſon, but half as aſſiduouſly as I have ſacrificed at the ſhrine of illuſion, my happineſs might have been enviable.' But do you not perceive, that my reaſon was the auxiliary of my paſſion, or rather my paſſion the generative principle of my reaſon? Had not theſe contradictions, theſe oppoſitions, rouſed the energy of my mind, I might have domeſticated, tamely, in the lap of indolence and apathy.

"I do aſk myſelf, every day—'Why ſhould I be miſerable?'—and I anſwer, 'Becauſe the ſtrong, predominant, ſentiment of my ſoul, cloſe twiſted with all its cheriſhed aſſociations, has been rudely torn away, and the blood follows from the lacerated wound. You would be aſhamed of placing diſappointed love in your enumeration of evils! Gray was not aſhamed of this—

'And pining love ſhall waſte their youth,
'And jealouſy, with rankling tooth,
'That inly gnaws the ſecret heart!'

'Theſe ſhall the ſtings of falſehood try,
'And hard unkindneſs' alter'd eye,
'That mocks the tear it forc'd to flow.'

"Is it poſſible that you can be inſenſible of all the mighty miſchiefs which have been cauſed by this paſſion—of the great events and changes of ſociety, to which it has operated as a powerful, though ſecret, ſpring? That Jupiter ſhrouded his glories beneath a mortal form; that he deſcended yet lower, and crawled as a reptile

reptile—that Hercules took the diſtaff, and Sampſon was ſhorn of his ſtrength, are, in their ſpirit, no fables. Yet, theſe were the legends of ages leſs degenerate than this, and ſtates of ſociety leſs corrupt. Aſk your own heart—whether ſome of its moſt exquiſite ſenſations have not ariſen from ſources, which, to nine-tenths of the world, would be equally inconceivable? Mine, I believe, is a *ſolitary madneſs in the eighteenth century: it is not on the altars of love, but of gold, that men, now, come to pay their offerings.*

" Why call woman, miſerable, oppreſſed, and impotent, woman—*cruſhed, and then inſulted*—why call her to *independence*—which not nature, but the barbarous and accurſed laws of ſociety, have denied her? *This is mockery!* Even you, wiſe and benevolent as you are, can mock the child of ſlavery and ſorrow! ' Excluded, as it were, by the pride, luxury, and caprice, of the world, from expanding my ſenſations, and wedding my ſoul to ſociety, I was conſtrained to beſtow the ſtrong affections, that glowed conſciouſly

within me, upon a few.'* Love, in minds of any elevation, cannot be generated but upon a real, or fancied, foundation of excellence. But what would be a miracle in architecture, is true in morals—the fabric can exiſt when the foundation has mouldered away. *Habit* daily produces this wonderful effect upon every feeling, and every principle. Is not this the theory which you have taught me?

"Am I not ſufficiently ingenuous?—I will give you a new proof of my frankneſs (though not the proof you require).—From the miſerable conſequences of wretched moral diſtinctions, from chaſtity having been conſidered as a ſexual virtue, all theſe calamities have flowed. Men are thus rendered ſordid and diſſolute in their pleaſures; their affections vitiated, and their feelings petrified; the ſimplicity of modeſt tenderneſs loſes its charm; they become incapable of ſatisfying the heart of a woman of ſenſibility and virtue.—Half the ſex, then, are the wretched, degraded, victims of brutal inſtinct: the

* Godwin's Caleb Williams.

remainder,

remainder, if they ſink not into mere frivolity and inſipidity, are ſublimed into a ſort of——[what ſhall I call them?]—— refined, romantic, factitious, unfortunate, beings; who, for the ſake of the preſent moment, dare not expoſe themſelves to complicated, inevitable, evils; evils, that will infallibly overwhelm them with miſery and regret! Woe be, more eſpecially, to thoſe who, poſſeſſing the dangerous gifts of fancy and feeling, find it as difficult to diſcover a ſubſtitute for the object as for the ſentiment! You, who are a philoſopher, will you ſtill controvert the principles founded in truth and nature? 'Groſs as is my folly,' (and I do not deny it) 'you may perceive I was not wholly wandering in darkneſs. But while the wintry ſun of hope illumined the fairy froſt-work with a ſingle, ſlanting, ray—dazzled by the tranſient brightneſs, I dreaded the meridian fervors that ſhould diſſolve the glittering charm. Yes! it was madneſs—but it was the pleaſurable madneſs which none but madmen know.

"I cannot anſwer your queſtion—Pain me not by its repetition; neither ſeek to enſnare

enſnare me to the diſcloſure. Unkindly, ſeverely, as I have been treated, I will not riſque, even, the poſſibility of injuring the man, whom I have ſo tenderly loved, in the eſteem of any one. Were I to name him, you know him not; you could not judge of his qualities. He is not 'a model of excellence.' I perceive it, with pain—and if obliged to retract my judgment on ſome parts of his character ——I retract it with agonizing reluctance! But I could trace the ſources of his errors, and candour and ſelf-abaſement imperiouſly compel me to a mild judgment, to ſtifle the petulant ſuggeſtions of a wounded ſpirit.

"Ought not our principles, my friend, to ſoften the aſperity of our cenſures?—Could I have won him to my arms, I thought I could ſoften, and even elevate, his mind—a mind, in which I ſtill perceive a great proportion of good. I weep for him, as well as for myſelf. He will, one day, know my value, and feel my loſs. Still, I am ſenſible, that, by my extravagance, I have given a great deal

of

of vexation (poſſibly ſome degradation), to a being, whom I had no right to perſecute, or to compel to chuſe happineſs through a medium of my creation. I cannot exactly tell the extent of the injury I may have done him. A long train of conſequences ſucceed, even, our moſt indifferent actions.——Strong energies, though they anſwer not the end propoſed, muſt yet produce correſpondent effects. Morals and mechanics are here analogous. No longer, then, diſtreſs me by the repetition of a queſtion I ought not to anſwer. I am content to be the victim—Oh! may I be the only victim—of my folly!

"One more obſervation allow me to make, before I conclude. That we can 'admire, eſteem, and love,' an individual —(for love in the abſtract, loving mankind collectively, conveys to me no idea) —which muſt be, in fact, depending upon that individual for a large ſhare of our felicity, and not lament his loſs, in proportion to our apprehenſion of his worth, appears to me a propoſition, involving

volving in itſelf an abſurdity; therefore demonſtrably falſe.

"Let me, my friend, ſee you ere long —your remonſtrance has affected me— ſave me from myſelf!"

TO THE SAME.

[In Continuation.]

"My letter having been delayed a few days, through a miſtake—I reſume my pen; for, running my eye over what I had written, I perceive (confounded by the force of your expreſſions) I have granted you too much. My conduct was not, altogether, ſo inſane as I have been willing to allow. It is certain, that could I have attained the end propoſed, my happineſs had been encreaſed. 'It is neceſſary for me to love and admire, or I ſink into ſadneſs.' The behaviour of the man, whom I ſought to move, appeared to me too inconſiſtent to be the reſult of *indifference*. To be rouſed and ſtimulated by

by obſtacles—obſtacles admitting hope, becauſe obſcurely ſeen—is no mark of weakneſs. Could I have ſubdued, what I, *then*, conceived to be the *prejudices* of a worthy man, I could have increaſed both his happineſs and my own. I deeply reaſoned, and philoſophized, upon the ſubject. Perſeverance, with little ability, has effected wonders;—with perſeverance, I felt, that, I had the power of uniting ability—confiding in that power, I was the dupe of my own reaſon. No other man, perhaps, could have acted the part which this man has acted:—how, then, was I to take ſuch a part into my calculations?

"Do not miſconceive me—it is no miracle that I did not inſpire affection. On this ſubject, the mortification I have ſuffered has humbled me, it may be, even, unduly in my own eyes—but to the emotions of my pride, I would diſdain to give words. Whatever may have been my feelings, I am too proud to expreſs the rage of ſlighted love!—Yet, I am ſenſible

ble to all the powers of thoſe charming lines of Pope——

'Unequal taſk, a paſſion to reſign,
'For hearts ſo touch'd, ſo pierc'd, ſo loſt, as mine!
'Ere ſuch a ſoul regains its peaceful ſtate,
'How often muſt it love, how often hate;
'How often hope, deſpair, reſent, regret,
'Conceal, diſdain, *do all things but forget!*'

"But to return. I purſued, comparatively, (as I thought) a certain good; and when, at times, diſcouraged, I have repeated to myſelf—What! after all theſe pains, ſhall I relinquiſh my efforts, when, perhaps, on the very verge of ſucceſs?—To ſay nothing of the difficulty of forcing an active mind out of its trains—if I deſiſted, what was to be the reſult? The ſenſations I now feel—apathy, ſtagnation, abhorred vacuity!

"You cannot reſiſt the force of my reaſoning—you, who are acquainted with, who know how to paint, in colours true to nature, the human heart—you, who admire, as a proof of power, the deſtructive courage of an Alexander, even the fanatic

fanatice fury of a Ravaillac—you, who honour the pernicious ambition of an Auguſtus Cæſar, as beſpeaking the potent, energetic, mind!——why ſhould *you* affect to be intolerant to a paſſion, though differing in nature, generated on the ſame principles, and by a parallel proceſs. The capacity of perception, or of receiving ſenſation, is (or generates) the power; into what channel that power ſhall be directed, depends not on ourſelves. Are we not the creatures of outward impreſſions? Without ſuch impreſſions, ſhould we be any thing? Are not paſſions and powers ſynonimous—or can the latter be produced without the lively intereſt that conſtitutes the former? Do you dream of annihilating the one—and will not the other be extinguiſhed? With the apoſtle, Paul, permit me to ſay—'I am not mad, but ſpeak the words of truth and ſoberneſs.'

"To what purpoſe did you read my confeſſions, but to trace in them a character formed, like every other human character, by the reſult of unavoidable impreſſions, and the chain of neceſſary events.

events. I feel, that my arguments are incontrovertible:—I ſuſpect that, by affecting to deny their force, you will endeavour to deceive either me or yourſelf. —I have acquired the power of reaſoning on this ſubject at a dear rate—at the expence of inconceivable ſuffering. Attempt not to deny me the miſerable, expenſive, victory. I am ready to ſay—(ungrateful that I am)—Why did you put me upon calling forth my ſtrong reaſons?

"I perceive there is no cure for me—(apathy is, not the reſtoration to health, but, the morbid lethargy of the ſoul) but by a new train of impreſſions, of whatever nature, equally forcible with the paſt.—You will tell me, It remains with myſelf whether I will predetermine to reſiſt ſuch impreſſions. Is this true? Is it philoſophical? Aſk yourſelf. What!—can *even you* ſhrink from the conſequences of your own principles?

"One word more—You accuſe me of brooding in ſilence over my ſenſations—of conſidering them as a 'ſacred depoſit.' Concealment is particularly repug-

nant

nant to my diſpoſition——yet a thouſand delicacies—a thouſand nameleſs ſolicitudes, and apprehenſions, ſealed my lips! —He who inſpired them was, alone, the depoſitary of my moſt ſecret thoughts!—my heart was unreſervedly open before him—I covered my paper with its emotions, and tranſmitted it to him—like him who whiſpered his ſecret into the earth, to relieve the burden of uncommunicated thought. My ſecret was equally ſafe, and received in equal ſilence! Alas! he was not then ignorant of the effects it was likely to produce!

"EMMA."

Mr. Francis continued his humane and friendly attentions; and, while he oppoſed my ſentiments, as conceiving them deſtructive of my tranquillity, mingled with his oppoſition a gentle and delicate conſideration for my feelings, that ſenſibly affected me, and excited my grateful attachment. He judged right, that, by ſtimulating my mind into action, the ſenſations,

ſations, which ſo heavily oppreſſed it, might be, in ſome meaſure, mitigated—by diverting the courſe of my ideas into different channels, and by that means abating their force. His kindneſs ſoothed and flattered me, and communication relieved my thoughts.

CHAP. XIII.

THE period which ſucceeded theſe events, though tedious in wearing away, marked by no viciſſitude, has left little impreſſion behind. The tenor of my days reſembled the ſtill ſurface of a ſtagnant lake, emboſomed in a deep cavern, over which the refreſhing breezes never ſweep. Sad, vacant, inactive—the faculties both of mind and body ſeemed almoſt ſuſpended. I became weak, languid, enervated——my diſorder was a lethargy of ſoul. This was gradually ſucceeded by diſeaſe

diſeaſe of body:—an inactivity, ſo contrary to all the habits of my paſt life, generated morbid humours, and brought on a ſlow, remitting, fever. I recovered, by degrees, from this attack, but remained for ſome time in a debilitated, though convaleſcent, ſtate. A few weeks after my diſorder returned, laſted longer, and left me ſtill more weakened and depreſſed. A third time it aſſailed me, at a ſhorter interval; and, though leſs violent, was more protracted, and more exhauſting.

Mrs. Denbeigh, alarmed by my ſituation, wrote to Mrs. Harley, expreſſing the apprehenſions which ſhe entertained. From this dear friend, who was herſelf in a declining ſtate of health, I received a preſſing invitation to viſit, once more, the village of F———; and to ſeek, from change of air, change of ſcene, and the cordial endearments of friendſhip, a reſtoration for my debilitated frame, and a balm for my wounded mind.

My relation, at this period, had letters from her huſband, informing her, that the term of his reſidence in India was prolonged;

longed; preſſing her to join him there, and to come over in the next ſhip. To this requeſt ſhe joyfully acceded; and, hearing that a packet was about to ſail for Bengal, ſecured her paſſage, and began immediately to make preparations for her departure. I no longer heſitated to comply with the entreaties of my friend; beſides the tie of ſtrong affection, which drew me to her, I had, at preſent, little other reſource.

After affectionately embracing Mrs. Denbeigh, wiſhing a happy iſſue to her voyage, thanking her for all her kindneſs, and leaving a letter of grateful acknowledgment for Mr. Francis, I quitted the metropolis, with an aching heart, and a waſted frame. My couſin accompanied me to the inn, from whence the vehicle ſet out that was to convey me to Mrs. Harley. We parted in ſilence —a crowd of retroſpective ideas of the paſt, and ſolicitudes reſpecting the future, occupied our thoughts—our ſenſations were too affecting for words.

The

The carriage quitted London at the cloſe of the evening, and travelled all night:—it was towards the end of the year. At midnight we paſſed over Hounſlow and Bagſhot heaths. 'The moon,' to adopt the language of Oſſian, 'looked through broken clouds, and brightened their dark-brown ſides.' A loud November blaſt howled over the heath, and whiſtled through the fern.—There was a melancholy deſolation in the ſcene, that was in uniſon with my feelings, and which overwhelmed my ſpirits with a tide of tender recollections. I recalled to my imagination a thouſand intereſting images—I indulged in all the wild enthuſiaſm of my character. My fellow-travellers ſlept tranquilly, while my ſoul was awake to agonizing ſorrow. I adopted the language of the tender Eloiſa—'Why,' ſaid I, 'am I indebted for life to his care, whoſe cruelty has rendered it inſupportable? Inhuman, as he is, let him fly from me for ever, and deny himſelf the ſavage pleaſure of being an eye-witneſs to my ſorrows!—But why do

I rave thus?—He is not to be blamed—*I, alone, am guilty*—I, alone, am the author of my own misfortunes, and ſhould, therefore, be the only object of anger and reſentment.'*

Weakened by my late indiſpoſition, fatigued by the rough motion of the carriage, and exhauſted by ſtrong emotion, when arrived at the end of my journey, I was obliged to be lifted from the coach, and carried into the cottage of my friend. The ſervant led the way to the library—the door opened——Mrs. Harley advanced, to receive me, with tottering ſteps. The ravages of grief, and the traces of ſickneſs, were viſible in her dear, affectionate, countenance. I claſped my hands, and, lifting up my eyes, beheld the portrait of Auguſtus—beheld again the reſemblance of thoſe features ſo deeply engraven on my heart! My imagination was raiſed—methought the lively colours of the complexion had

* Rouſſeau

faded,

faded, the benignant ſmile had vaniſhed, and an expreſſion of perplexity and ſternneſs uſurped its place. I uttered a faint ſhriek, and fell lifeleſs into the arms of my friend. It was ſome time before I returned to ſenſe and recollection, when I found myſelf on the bed, in the little chamber which had formerly been appropriated to my uſe. My friend ſat beſide me, holding my hand in her's, which ſhe bathed with her tears. 'Thank God!' ſhe exclaimed, in a rapturous accent, (as, with a deep ſigh, I raiſed my languid eyes, and turned them mournfully towards her —'ſhe lives! — My Emma! — child of my affections!'—Sobs ſuppreſſed her) utterance. I drew the hand, which held mine, towards me—I preſſed it to my boſom ——— '*My mother!*'——I would have ſaid; but the tender appellation died away upon my lips, in inarticulate murmurs.

Theſe ſevere ſtruggles were followed by a return of my diſorder. Mrs. Harley would ſcarcely be perſuaded to quit my chamber for a moment—her tenderneſs

ſeemed to afford her new ſtrength;—but theſe exertions accelerated the progreſs of an internal malady, which had for ſome time paſt been gaining ground, and gradually undermining her health.

Youth, and a good conſtitution, aided by the kind ſolicitudes of friendſhip, reſtored me, in a few weeks, to a ſtate of convaleſcence. I obſerved the declining ſtrength of my friend with terror—I accuſed myſelf of having, though involuntarily, added to theſe alarming ſymptoms, by the new fatigues and anxieties which I had occaſioned her. Affection inſpired me with thoſe energies, that reaſon had vainly dictated. I ſtruggled to ſubdue myſelf—I ſtifled the impetuous ſuggeſtions of my feelings, in exerting myſelf to fulfil the duties of humanity. My mind aſſumed a firmer tone—I became, once more, the cheerful companion, the tender conſoler, the attentive nurſe, of this excellent woman, to whoſe kindneſs I was ſo much indebted—and, if I ſtole a few moments in the day, while my friend repoſed, to gaze on the reſemblance

blance of Auguſtus, to weep over the teſtimonies of his former reſpect and friendſhip, I quickly chaſed from my boſom, and my countenance, every trace of ſadneſs, when ſummoned to attend my friend.

CHAP. XIV.

THE winter came on ſevere and cold. Mrs. Harley was forbidden to expoſe herſelf to the froſty air, which ſeemed to invigorate my languid frame. I was conſtituted her almoner, to diſtribute to the neighbouring poor the ſcanty portion, which ſhe was enabled, by a rigid œconomy, to ſpare from her little income: yet the value of this diſtribution had been more than redoubled, by the gentler charities of kind accents, tender ſympathy, and wholeſome counſels. To theſe indigent, but induſtrious, cottagers, I ſtudied to be the worthy repreſentative

of their amiable benefactreſs, and found my reward in their grateful attachment, and the approving ſmiles of my friend.

By degrees, ſhe ventured to converſe with me on the ſubject neareſt her heart —the ſituation of her ſon. He had been obliged to yield to the proofs produced of his marriage, which he had, at firſt, ſeemed deſirous of evading. He had written, with reſerve, upon the ſubject to his mother; but, from the enquiries of a common friend, ſhe had reaſon to apprehend, that his engagement had been of an imprudent nature. Two children were, already, the fruits of it: the mother, with a feminine helpleſſneſs of character, had a feeble conſtitution. The ſmall fortune, which Auguſtus had originally ſhared with his family, was greatly reduced. His education and habits had unfitted him for thoſe exertions which the ſupport of an encreaſing family neceſſarily required:—his ſpirits (her friend had informed her) ſeemed broken, and his temper ſoured. Some efforts had been made

to

to ſerve him, which his lofty ſpirit had repelled with diſdain.

This narration deeply affected my heart —I had reſigned myſelf to his loſs—but the idea of his ſuffering, I felt, was an evil infinitely ſeverer. It was this conviction that preyed inceſſantly on the peace and health of his mother. My fortitude failed, when I would have tried to ſuſtain her; and I could only afford the melancholy ſatisfaction of mingling my ſorrows with her's.

The diſorder of my friend rapidly increaſed——her mind became weakened, and her feelings wayward and irritable. I watched her inceſſantly—I ſtrove, by every alleviating care, to ſoften her pains. Towards the approach of ſpring the ſymptoms grew more threatening; and it was judged, by her phyſician, neceſſary to apprize her family of her immediate danger. What a trial for my exhauſted heart! I traced, with a trembling hand, a line to this melancholy purpoſe—addreſſed it to Mr. Harley, and through him to his younger brother and ſiſters.

In a few days they arrived in the village —ſending from the inn a ſervant, to prepare their mother for their approach. I gently intimated to her the viſitants we might expect. The previous evening, a change had taken place, which indicated approaching diſſolution; and her mind (not uncommon in ſimilar caſes) ſeemed, almoſt inſtantaneouſly, to have recovered a portion of its original ſtrength. She ſighed deeply, while her eyes, which were fixed wiſtfully on my face, were lighted with a bright, but tranſient, luſtre.

"My dear Emma," ſaid ſhe, "this is "a trying moment for us both. I ſhall "ſoon cloſe my eyes, for ever, upon all "worldly cares——Still cheriſh, in your "pure and ingenuous mind, a friendſhip "for my Auguſtus—the darling of my "ſoul! He may, in future, ſtand in "need of conſolation. I had formed "hopes—vain hopes!—in which you "and he were equally concerned. In "the happineſs of this partially-favoured "child—this idol of my affections—all "mine was concentrated. He has diſap-

"pointed

" pointed me, and I have loſt the deſire
" of living—Yet, he has noble qualities!
" —Who, alas! is perfect? Summon
" your fortitude, collect your powers,
" my child, for this interview!"

She ſunk upon her pillow—I anſwered her only with my tears. A ſervant entered———but ſpoke not———her look announced her tidings—It caught the eye of Mrs. Harley———

" Let them enter," ſaid ſhe; and ſhe raiſed herſelf, to receive them, and aſſumed an aſpect of compoſure.

I covered my face with my handkerchief—I heard the ſound of footſteps approaching the bed—I heard the murmurs of filial ſorrow—The voice of Auguſtus, in low and interrupted accents, ſtruck upon my ear—it thrilled through my nerves—I ſhuddered involuntarily——What a moment! My friend ſpoke a few words, in a faint tone.

" My children," ſhe added, " repay to
" this dear girl," laying her hand upon mine, " the debt of kindneſs I owe her—
" ſhe has ſmoothed the pillow of death—

" ſhe is an orphan—ſhe is tender and un-
" fortunate."

I ventured to remove for a moment the handkerchief from my eyes—they met thoſe of Auguſtus—he was kneeling by the bed-ſide—his countenance was wan, and every feature ſunk in dejection; a ſhivering crept through my veins, and chilled my heart with a ſenſation of icy coldneſs—he removed his eyes, fixing them on his dying mother.

" My ſon," ſhe reſumed, in ſtill fainter accents, " behold in Emma, your ſiſter—
" *your friend!*—confide in her—ſhe is
" worthy of your confidence?"—' Will you not love him, my child,' —(gazing upon me,)— ' with a ſiſterly affection?"

I hid my face upon the pillow of my friend—I threw my arms around her—
" Your requeſt is ſuperfluous, my friend,
" my more than parent, *ah, how ſuper-*
" *fluous!*"

" Forgive me, I know the tenderneſs
" of your nature—yielding, in theſe part-
" ing moments, to the predominant affec-
" tion of my heart—I fear, I have wound-

" ed that tender nature." 'Farewel, my children! Love and aſſiſt each other—Auguſtus, where is your hand?—my ſight fails me— God bleſs you and your little ones—*God bleſs you all!* My laſt ſigh—my laſt prayer—is yours.'

Exhauſted by theſe efforts, ſhe fainted—Auguſtus uttered a deep groan, and raiſed her in his arms—but life was fled.

At the remembrance of theſe ſcenes, even at this period, my heart is melted within me.

What is there of mournful magic in the emotions of virtuous ſorrow, that in retracing, in dwelling upon them, mingles with our tears a ſad and ſublime rapture? Nature, that has infuſed ſo much miſery into the cup of human life, has kindly mixed this ſtrange and myſterious ingredient to qualify the bitter draught.

CHAP. XV.

AFTER the performance of the laſt melancholy duties, this afflicted family prepared to ſeparate. I received from them, individually, friendly offers of ſervice, and expreſſions of acknowledgment, for my tender attentions to their deceaſed parent. I declined, for the preſent, their invitations, and proffered kindneſs, though uncertain how to diſpoſe of myſelf, or which way to direct my courſe. Auguſtus behaved towards me with diſtant, cold, reſpect. I obſerved in his features, under a conſtrained appearance of compoſure, marks of deep and ſtrong emotion. I recalled to my mind the injunctions of my deceaſed friend—I yearned to pour into his boſom the balm of ſympathy, but, with an aſpect bordering on ſeverity, he repreſſed the expreſſion of thoſe ingenuous feelings which formed my character, and ſhunned the confidence I ſo earneſtly ſought. Unfortunate

tunate love had, in my ſubdued and ſoftened mind, laid the foundation of a fervent and durable friendſhip—But my love, my friendſhip, were equally contemned! I relinquiſhed my efforts—I ſhut myſelf in my chamber—and, in ſecret, indulged my ſorrows.

The houſe of my deceaſed friend was ſold, and the effects diſpoſed of. On the day previous to their removal, and the departure of the family for London, I ſtole into the library, at the cloſe of the evening, to view, for *the laſt time*, the ſcene of ſo many delightful, ſo many afflicting, emotions. A myſterious and ſacred enchantment is ſpread over every circumſtance, even every inanimate object, connected with the affections. To thoſe who are ſtrangers to theſe delicate, yet powerful ſympathies, this may appear ridiculous—but the ſenſations are not the leſs genuine, nor the leſs in nature. I will not attempt to analyſe them; it is a ſubject upon which the language of philoſophy would appear frigid, and on which I feel myſelf every moment on the verge

verge of fanaticiſm. Yet, affections like theſe are not ſo much weakneſs, as ſtrength perhaps badly exerted. Rouſſeau was, right, when he aſſerted, that, 'Common men know nothing of violent ſorrows, nor do great paſſions ever break out in weak minds. Energy of ſentiment is the characteriſtic of a noble ſoul.'

I gazed from the windows on the ſhrubbery, where I had ſo often wandered with my friends—where I had fondly cheriſhed ſo many flattering, ſo many viſionary, proſpects. Every ſpot, every tree, was aſſociated with ſome paſt pleaſure, ſome tender recollection. The laſt rays of the ſetting ſun, ſtruggling from beneath a louring cloud, ſtreamed through its dark boſom, illumined its edges, played on the window in which I was ſtanding, and gilding the oppoſite ſide of the wainſcot, againſt which the picture of Auguſtus ſtill hung, ſhed a ſoft and mellow luſtre over the features. I turned almoſt unconſciouſly, and contemplated it with a long and deep regard. It ſeemed to ſmile benignly—it wore no traces of the cold

cold auſterity, the gloomy and inflexible reſerve, which now clouded the aſpect of the original. I called to my remembrance a thouſand intereſting converſations—when

'Tuned to happy uniſon of ſoul, a fairer world
'of which the vulgar never had a glimpſe, diſplayed,
'its charms.'

Abſorbed in thought, the crimſon reflection from the weſtern clouds gradually faded, while the deep ſhades of the evening, thickened by the appearance of a gathering tempeſt, involved in obſcurity the object on which, without diſtinctly perceiving it, I ſtill continued to gaze.

I was rouſed from this reverie by the ſudden opening of the door. Some perſon, whom the uncertain light prevented me from diſtinguiſhing, walked acroſs the room, with a ſlow and ſolemn pace, and, after taking ſeveral turns backwards and forwards, reclined on the ſopha, remaining for ſome time perfectly ſtill. A tremor ſhook my nerves—unable either to ſpeak, or to move, I continued ſilent

and

and trembling—my heart felt oppreſſed, almoſt to ſuffocation—at length, a deep, convulſive ſigh, forced its way.

"My God!" exclaimed the perſon, whoſe meditations I had interrupted, "what is that?"

It was the voice of Mr. Harley, he ſpoke in a ſtern tone, though with ſome degree of trepidation, and advanced haſtily towards the window againſt which I leaned.

The clouds had for ſome hours been gathering dark and gloomy. Juſt as Auguſtus had reached the place where I ſtood, a flaſh of lightning, pale, yet vivid, glanced ſuddenly acroſs my ſtartled ſight, and diſcovered to him the object which had alarmed him.

"Emma," ſaid he, in a ſoftened accent, taking my trembling and almoſt lifeleſs hand, "how came you here, which way "did you enter?"

I anſwered not—Another flaſh of lightning, ſtill brighter, blue and ſulphurous, illuminated the room, ſucceeded by a loud and long peal of thunder. Again

the

the heavens ſeem to rend aſunder and diſcover a ſheet of livid flame—a craſh of thunder, ſudden, loud, ſhort, immediately followed, beſpeaking the tempeſt near. I ſtarted with a kind of convulſive terror. Auguſtus led me from the window, and endeavoured, in vain, to find the door of the library—the temporary flaſhes, and total darkneſs by which they were ſucceeded, dazzled and confounded the ſight. I ſtumbled over ſome furniture, which ſtood in the middle of the room, and unable to recover my feet, which refuſed any longer to ſuſtain me, ſunk into the arms of Auguſtus, ſuffering him to lift me to the ſopha. He ſeated himſelf beſide me, the ſtorm continued; the clouds, every moment parting with a horrible noiſe, diſcovered an abyſs of fire, while the rain deſcended in a deluge. We ſilently contemplated this ſublime and terrible ſcene. Auguſtus ſupported me with one arm, while my trembling hand remained in his. The tempeſt ſoon exhauſted itſelf by its violence—the lightning became leſs fierce, gleaming at intervals

intervals—the thunder rolled off to a diſtance—its protracted ſound, lengthened by the echoes, faintly died away; while the rain continued to fall in a ſtill, though copious, ſhower.

My ſpirits grew calmer, I gently withdrew my hand from that of Mr. Harley. He once more enquired, but in a tone of greater reſerve, how I had entered the room without his knowledge? I explained, briefly and frankly, my ſituation, and the tender motives by which I had been influenced.

"It was not poſſible," added I, "to "take leave of this houſe *for ever*, with- "out recalling a variety of affecting and "melancholy ideas—I feel, that I have "loſt *my only friend*."

"This world," ſaid he, "may not un- "aptly be compared to the rapids on the "American rivers—We are hurried, in a "frail bark, down the ſtream—It is in "vain to reſiſt its courſe—happy are thoſe "whoſe voyage is ended!"

"My friend," replied I in a faultering voice, "I could teach my heart to bear

"your

" your loſs—though, God knows, the
" leſſon has been ſufficiently ſevere—
" but I know not how, with fortitude, to
" ſee you ſuffer."

" Suffering is the common lot of hu-
" manity—but, pardon me, when I ſay,
" your conduct has not tended to leſſen
" my vexations!"

" My errors have been the errors of
" *affection*—Do they deſerve this rigor?"

" Their ſource is not important, their
" conſequences have been the ſame—you
" make not the allowances you claim."

" Dear, and ſevere, friend!—Be not
" unjuſt—the confidence which I ſought,
" and merited, would have obviated"—

" I know what you would alledge—
" that confidence, you had reaſon to
" judge, was of a painful nature—it ought
" not to have been extorted."

" If I have been wrong, my faults have
" been ſeverely expiated—if the error has
" been *only mine*, ſurely my ſufferings
" have been in proportion; ſeduced by
" the fervor of my feelings; ignorant of
" your ſituation, if I wildly ſought to

" oblige

"oblige you to chuſe happineſs through "a medium of my creation—yet, to have "aſſured *yours*, was I not willing to "riſque all my own? I perceive my ex- "travagance, my views were equally "falſe and romantic—dare I to ſay— "they were the ardent exceſſes of a ge- "nerous mind? Yes! my wildeſt miſ- "takes had in them a dignified mixture of "virtue. While the inſtitutions of ſo- "ciety war againſt nature and happineſs, "the mind of energy, ſtruggling to eman- "cipate itſelf, will entangle itſelf in "error"—

"Permit me to aſk you," interrupted Auguſtus, "whether, abſorbed in your "own ſenſations, you allowed yourſelf to "remember, and to reſpect, the feelings "of others?"

I could no longer reſtrain my tears, I wept for ſome moments in ſilence—Auguſtus breathed a half-ſuppreſſed ſigh, and turned from me his face.

"The pangs which have rent my "heart," reſumed I, in low and broken accents, "have, I confeſs, been but too "poignant!

" poignant! That lacerated heart ſtill " bleeds—we have neither of us been " guiltleſs—*Alas! who is?* Yet in my " boſom, ſevere feelings are not more " painful than tranſient—already have I " loſt ſight of your unkindneſs, (God " knows how little I merited it!) in ſtron- " ger ſympathy for your ſorrows—what- " ever be their nature! We have both " erred—why ſhould we not exchange " mutual forgiveneſs? Why ſhould we af- " flict each other? Friendſhip, like cha- " rity, ſhould ſuffer all things and be " kind!"

" My mind," replied he coldly, " is " differently conſtituted."

" *Unpitying man!* It would be hard for " us, if we were all to be judged at ſo ſe- " vere a tribunal—you have been a *lover*," added I, in a ſofter tone, " and can you " not forgive the faults of *love?*"

He aroſe, viſibly agitated—I alſo ſtood up—my boſom deeply wounded, and, unknowing what I did, took his hand and preſſed it to my lips.

" You

"You have rudely thrown from you a "heart of exquiſite ſenſibility—you have "contemned my love, and you diſdain my "friendſhip—is it brave, is it manly," added I wildly—almoſt unconſcious of what I ſaid—forgetting at the moment his ſituation and my own—"thus to "triumph over a ſpirit, ſubdued by its "affections into unreſiſting meekneſs?"

He broke from me, and precipitately quitted the room.

I threw myſelf upon the floor, and, reſting my head on the ſeat which Auguſtus had ſo lately occupied, paſſed the night in cruel conflict—a tempeſt more terrible than that which had recently ſpent its force, ſhook my ſoul! The morning dawned, ere I had power to remove myſelf from the fatal ſpot, where the meaſure of my afflictions ſeemed filled up.—Virtue may conquer weakneſs, but who can bear to be deſpiſed by thoſe they love. The ſun darted its beams full upon me, but its ſplendour appeared mockery—hope and joy were for ever excluded from my benighted ſpirit. The contempt of the world, the ſcoffs of ignorance, the contumely of the

the proud, I could have borne without ſhrinking—but to find myſelf rejected, contemned, ſcorned, by him with whom, of all mankind, my heart claimed kindred; by him for whom my youth, my health, my powers, were conſuming in ſilent anguiſh—who, inſtead of pouring balm into the wound he had inflicted, adminiſtered only corroſives!—*It was too painful.* I felt, that I had been a laviſh prodigal—that I had become a wretched bankrupt; that there was but *one way* to make me happy and *a thouſand* to make me miſerable! Enfeebled and exhauſted, I crawled to my apartment, and, throwing myſelf on the bed, gave a looſe to the agony of my ſoul.

CHAP. XVI.

UNDER pretence of indiſpoſition, I refuſed to meet the family. I heard them depart. Too proud to accept of obligation, I had not confided to them my plans, if plans they could be called, where no diſtinct end was in view.

A few

A few hours after their departure, I once more ſeated myſelf in a ſtage coach, in which I had previouſly ſecured a place, and took the road to London. I perceived, on entering the carriage, only one paſſenger, who had placed himſelf in the oppoſite corner, and in whom, to my great ſurprize, I immediately recognized Mr. Montague. We had not met ſince the viſit he had paid me at Mrs. Harley's, the reſult of which I have already related: ſince that period, it had been reported in the village, that he addreſſed Sarah Morton, and that they were about to be united. Montague manifeſted equal ſurprize at our meeting: the intelligence of my friend's death (at which he expreſſed real concern) had not reached him, neither was he acquainted with my being in that part of the country. He had not lately been at Mr. Morton's, he informed me, but had juſt left his father's, and was going to London to complete his medical ſtudies.

After theſe explanations, abſorbed in painful contemplation, I for ſome time made

made little other return to his repeated civilities, than by cold monoſyllables: till at length, his cordial ſympathy, his gentle accents, and humane attentions, awakened me from my reverie. Ever acceſſible to the ſoothings of kindneſs, I endeavoured to exert myſelf, to prove the ſenſe I felt of his humanity. Gratified by having ſucceeded in attracting my attention, he redoubled his efforts to cheer and amuſe me. My dejected and languid appearance had touched his feelings, and, towards the end of our journey, his unaffected zeal to alleviate the anxiety under which I evidently appeared to labour, ſoothed my mind and inſpired me with confidence.

He reſpectfully requeſted to know in what part of the town I reſided, and hoped to be permitted to pay his reſpects to me, and to enquire after my welfare? This queſtion awakened in my boſom ſo many complicated and painful ſenſations, that, after remaining ſilent for a few minutes, I burſt into a flood of tears.

"I have no home;" ſaid I, in a voice choaked with ſobs—"I am an alien in the "world—and alone in the univerſe."

His eyes gliſtened, his countenance expreſſed the moſt lively, and tender, commiſeration, while, in a timid and reſpectful voice, he made me offers of ſervice, and entreated me to permit him to be uſeful to me.

"I then mentioned, in brief, my preſent unprotected ſituation, and hinted, that as my fortune was ſmall, I could wiſh to procure a humble, but decent, apartment in a reputable family, till I had conſulted one friend, who, I yet flattered myſelf, was intereſted in my concerns, or till I could fix on a more eligible method of providing for myſelf."

He informed me—"That he had a diſtant relation in town, a decent, careful, woman, who kept a boarding houſe, and whoſe terms were very reaſonable. He was aſſured, would I permit him to introduce me to her, ſhe would be happy, ſhould her accommodation ſuit me, to pay me every attention in her power."

In

In my forlorn ſituation, I confided, without heſitation, in his recommendation, and gratefully acceded to the propoſal.

Mr. Montague introduced me to this lady in the moſt flattering terms, ſhe received me with civility, but, I fancied, not without a ſlight mixture of diſtruſt. I agreed with her for a neat chamber, with a ſitting room adjoining, on the ſecond floor, and ſettled for the terms of my board, more than the whole amount of the intereſt of my little fortune.

CHAP. XVII.

I TOOK an early opportunity of addreſſing a few lines to Mr. Francis, informing him of my ſituation, and entreating his counſel. I waited a week, impatiently, for his reply, but in vain: well acquainted with his punctuality, and alarmed by this ſilence, I mentioned the

ſtep I had taken, and my apprehenſions, to Montague, who immediately repaired, himſelf, to the houſe of Mr. Francis; and, finding it ſhut up, was informed by the neighbours, that Mr. Francis had quitted England, a ſhort time before, in company with a friend, intending to make a continental tour.

This intelligence was a new ſhock to me. I called on ſome of my former acquaintance, mentioning to them my wiſh of procuring pupils, or of engaging in any other occupation fitted to my talents. I was received by ſome with civility, by others with coldneſs, but every one appeared too much engroſſed by his own affairs to give himſelf the trouble of making any great exertion for others.

I returned diſpirited—I walked through the crowded city, and obſerved the anxious and buſy faces of all around me. In the midſt of my fellow beings, occupied in various purſuits, I ſeemed, as if in an immenſe deſart, a ſolitary outcaſt from ſociety. Active, induſtrious, willing to employ my faculties in any way, by which I might

I might procure an honeſt independence, I beheld no path open to me, but that to which my ſpirit could not ſubmit—the degradation of ſervitude. Hapleſs woman!—cruſhed by the iron hand of barbarous deſpotiſm, pampered into weakneſs, and trained the ſlave of meretricious folly!—what wonder, that, ſhrinking from the chill blaſts of penury (which the pernicious habits of thy education have little fitted thy tender frame to encounter) thou liſteneſt to the honied accents of the ſpoiler; and, to eſcape the galling chain of ſervile dependence, ruſheſt into the career of infamy, from whence the falſe and cruel morality of the world forbids thy return, and perpetuates thy diſgrace and miſery! When will mankind be aware of the uniformity, of the importance, of truth? When will they ceaſe to confound, by ſexual, by political, by theological, diſtinctions, thoſe immutable principles, which form the true baſis or virtue and happineſs? The paltry expedients of combating error with error, and prejudice with prejudice, in one in-

variable and melancholy circle, have already been ſufficiently tried, have already been demonſtrated futile:——they have armed man againſt man, and filled the world with crimes, and with blood.—How has the benign and gentle nature of Reform been miſtated! 'One falſe idea,' juſtly ſays an acute and philoſophic writer,* 'united with others, produces ſuch as are neceſſarily falſe; which, combining again with all thoſe the memory retains, give to all a tinge of falſehood. One error, alone, is ſufficient to infect the whole maſs of the mind, and produce an infinity of capricious, monſtrous, notions.—Every vice is the error of the underſtanding; crimes and prejudices are brothers; truth and virtue ſiſters. Theſe things, known to the wiſe, are hid from fools!'

Without a ſufficiently intereſting purſuit, a fatal torpor ſtole over my ſpirits—my blood circulated languidly through my veins. Montague, in the intervals

* Helvetius.

from

from buſineſs and amuſement, continued to viſit me. He brought me books, read to me, chatted with me, preſſed me to accompany him to places of public entertainment, which (determined to incur no pecuniary obligation) I invariably refuſed.

I received his civilities with the leſs ſcruple, from the information I had received of his engagement with Miſs Morton; which, with his knowledge of my unhappy attachment, I thought, precluded every idea of a renewal of thoſe ſentiments he had formerly profeſſed for me.

In return for his friendſhip, I tried to ſmile, and exerted my ſpirits, to prove my grateful ſenſibility of his kindneſs: but, while he appeared to take a lively intereſt in my ſorrows, he carefully avoided a repetition of the language in which he had once addreſſed me; yet, at times, his tender concern ſeemed ſliding into a ſentiment ſtill ſofter, which obliged me to practiſe more reſerve: he was not inſenſible of this, and was frequently betrayed

into tranſient burſts of paſſion and reſentment, which, on my repelling with firmneſs, he would ſtruggle to repreſs, and afterwards abſent himſelf for a time.

Unable to deviſe any method of increaſing my income, and experiencing the preſſure of ſome daily wants and inconveniencies, I determined, at length, on ſelling the ſum veſted, in my name, in the funds, and purchaſing a life annuity.

Recollecting the name of a banker, with whom my uncle, the friend of my infancy, had formerly kept caſh, I learned his reſidence, and, waiting upon him, made myſelf known as the niece of an old and worthy friend; at the ſame time acquainting him with my intentions.—He offered to tranſact the affair for me immediately, the funds being, then, in a very favourable poſition; and to preſerve the money in his hands till an opportunity ſhould offer of laying it out to advantage. I gave him proper credentials for the accompliſhing of this buſineſs, and returned to my apartment with a heart ſomewhat lightened. This ſcheme had never before

fore occurred to me. The banker, who was a man of commercial reputation, had aſſured me, that my fortune might now be ſold out with little loſs; and that, by purchaſing an annuity, on proper ſecurity, at ſeven or eight per cent, I might, with œconomy, be enabled to ſupport myſelf decently, with comfort and independence.

CHAP. XVIII.

SOME weeks elapſed, and I heard no more from my banker. A ſlight indiſpoſition confined me to the houſe. One evening, Mr. Montague, coming to my apartment to enquire after my health, brought with him a newſpaper (as was his frequent cuſtom), and, finding me unwell, and diſpirited, began to read ſome parts from it aloud, in the hope of amuſing me. Among the articles of home intelligence, a paragraph ſtated—

'The failure of a conſiderable mercantile houſe, which had created an alarm upon the Exchange, as, it was apprehended, ſome important conſequences would follow in the commercial world. A great banking-houſe, it was hinted, not many miles from ———, was likely to be affected, by ſome rumours, in connection with this buſineſs, which had occaſioned a conſiderable run upon it for the laſt two or three days.'

My attention was rouſed—I eagerly held out my hand for the paper, and peruſed this alarming paragraph, again and again, without obſerving the ſurprize expreſſed in the countenance of Montague, who was at a loſs to conceive why this intelligence ſhould be affecting to me.—I ſat, for ſome minutes, involved in thought, till a queſtion from my companion, ſeveral times repeated, occaſioned me to ſtart. I immediately recollected myſelf, and tried to reaſon away my fears, as vague and groundleſs. I was about to explain the nature of them to my friend—ſecretly accuſing myſelf for not having

having done ſo ſooner, and availed myſelf of his advice, when a ſervant, entering, put a letter into his hand.

Looking upon the ſeal and ſuperſcription, he changed colour, and opened it haſtily. Strong emotion was painted in his features while he peruſed it. I regarded him with anxiety. He roſe from his ſeat, walked up and down the room with a diſordered pace—opened the door, as if with an intention of going out—ſhut it—returned back again—threw himſelf into a chair—covered his face with his handkerchief—appeared in great agitation—and burſt into tears. I aroſe, went to him, and took his hand—"*My friend!*" ſaid I———I would have added ſomething more——but, unable to proceed, I ſunk into a ſeat beſide him, and wept in ſympathy. He preſſed my hand to his lips—folded me wildly in his arms, and attempted to ſpeak—but his voice was loſt in convulſive ſobs. I gently withdrew myſelf, and waited, in ſilence, till the violence of his emotions ſhould ſubſide. He held out to me the letter he

had received. I perused it. It contained an account of the sudden death of his father, and a summons for his immediate return to the country, to settle the affairs, and to take upon him his father's professional employment.

"You leave me, then!" said I—"I "lose my only remaining friend!"

"*Never!*"—he replied, emphatically.

I blushed for having uttered so improper, so selfish, a remark; and endeavoured to atone for it by forgetting the perils of my own situation, in attention to that of this ardent, but affectionate, young man. —His sufferings were acute and violent for some days, during which he quitted me only at the hours of repose—I devoted myself to sooth and console him. I felt, that I had been greatly indebted to his friendship and kindness, and I endeavoured to repay the obligation. He appeared fully sensible of my cares, and mingled with his acknowledgments expressions of a tenderness, so lively, and unequivocal, as obliged me, once more, to be more guarded in my behaviour.

In

In conſideration for the ſituation of Mr. Montague——I had forgotten the paragraph in the paper, till an accidental intelligence of the bankruptcy of the houſe, in which my little fortune was entruſted, confirmed to me the certainty of this terrible blow. Montague was ſitting with me when I received the unwelcome news.

"Gracious God!" I exclaimed, claſping my hands, and raiſing my eyes to heaven——"What is to become of me "now?—The meaſure of my ſorrows is "filled up!"

It was ſome time before I had power to explain the circumſtances to my companion.

"Do not diſtreſs yourſelf, my lovely "Emma," ſaid he; "I will be your "friend—your guardian——" (and he added, in a low, yet fervent, accent)—"*your huſband!*"

"No—no—no!" anſwered I, ſhaking my head, "that muſt not, cannot, be! I "would periſh, rather than take advantage "of a generoſity like yours. I will go to

"ſervice

"ſervice—I will work for my bread—
"and, if I cannot procure a wretched
"ſuſtenance—*I can but die!* Life, to
"me, has long been worthleſs!"

My countenance, my voice, my manner, but too forcibly expreſſed the keen anguiſh of my ſoul. I ſeemed to be marked out for the victim of a mercileſs deſtiny—*for the child of ſorrow!* The ſuſceptible temper of Montague, ſoftened by his own affliction, was moved by my diſtreſs. He repeated, and enforced, his propoſal, with all the ardour of a youthful, a warm, an uncorrupted, mind.

"You add to my diſtreſs," replied I.
"I have not a heart to beſtow——I la-
"viſhed mine upon one, who ſcorned
"and contemned it. Its ſenſibility is
"now exhauſted. Shall I reward a faith-
"ful and generous tenderneſs, like yours,
"with a cold, a worthleſs, an alienated,
"mind? No, no!——Seek an object
"more worthy of you, and leave me to
"my fate."

At that moment, I had forgotten the report of his engagement with Miſs Morton;

ton; but, on his perſiſting, vehemently, to urge his ſuit, I recollected, and immediately mentioned, it, to him. He confeſſed—

'That, ſtung by my rejection, and preference of Mr. Harley, he had, at one period, entertained a thought of that nature; but that he had fallen out with the family, in adjuſting the ſettlements. Mrs. Morton had perſuaded her huſband to make, what he conceived to be, ungenerous requiſitions. Miſs Morton had diſcovered much artifice, but little ſenſibility, on the occaſion. Diſguſted with the apathy of the father, the inſolence of the mother, and the low cunning of the daughter, he had abruptly quitted them, and broken off all intercourſe with the family.'

It is not neceſſary to enlarge on this part of my narrative. Suffice it to ſay, that, after a long conteſt, my deſolate ſituation, added to the perſevering affection of this enthuſiaſtic young man, prevailed over my objections. His happineſs, he told me, entirely depended on my

my deciſion. I would not deceive him: —I related to him, with ſimplicity and truth, all the circumſtances of my paſt conduct towards Mr. Harley. He liſtened to me with evident emotion—interrupted me, at times, with execrations; and, once or twice, vowing vengeance on Auguſtus, appeared on the verge of outrage. But I at length reaſoned him into greater moderation, and obliged him to do juſtice to the merit and honour of Mr. Harley. He acquieſced reluctantly, and with an ill grace, yet, with a lover-like partiality, attributed his conduct to cauſes, of which I had diſcerned no traces. He aſſured himſelf, that the affections of a heart, tender as mine, would be ſecured by kindneſs and aſſiduity—and I at laſt yielded to his importunity. We were united in a ſhort time, and I accompanied my huſband to the town of ———, in the county of ———, the reſidence of his late father.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

MR. Montague preſented me to his relations and friends, by whom I was received with a flattering diſtinction. My wearied ſpirits began now to find repoſe. My huſband was much occupied in the duties of his profeſſion. We had a reſpectable circle of acquaintance: In the intervals of ſocial engagement, and domeſtic employment, ever thirſting after knowledge, I occaſionally applied myſelf to the ſtudy of phyſic, anatomy, and ſurgery, with the various branches of ſcience connected with them; by which means I frequently rendered myſelf eſſentially ſerviceable to my friend; and, by exerciſing my underſtanding and humanity, ſtrengthened my mind, and ſtilled the importunate ſuggeſtions of a heart too exquiſitely ſenſible.

The manners of Mr. Montague were kind and affectionate, though ſubject, at times, to inequalities and ſtarts of paſſion; he

he confided in me, as his beſt and trueſt friend—and I deſerved his confidence:—yet, I frequently obſerved the reſtleſſneſs and impetuoſity of his diſpoſition with apprehenſion.

I felt for my huſband a rational eſteem, and a grateful affection:—but thoſe romantic, high-wrought, frenzied, emotions, that had rent my heart during its firſt attachment—that enthuſiaſm, that fanaticiſm, to which oppoſition had given force, the bare recollection of which ſtill ſhook my ſoul with anguiſh, no longer exiſted. Montague was but too ſenſible of this difference, which naturally reſulted from the change of circumſtances, and was unreaſonable enough to complain of what ſecured our tranquillity. If a cloud, at times, hung over my brow—if I relapſed, for a ſhort period, into a too habitual melancholy, he would grow captious, and complain.

"You eſteem me, Emma: I confide "in your principles, and I glory in your "friendſhip—but, you have never *loved* "me!"

"Why,

"Why will you be ſo unjuſt, both to "me, and to yourſelf?"

"Tell me, then, ſincerely—I know "you will not deceive me——Have you "ever felt for me thoſe ſentiments with "which Auguſtus Harley inſpired you?"

"Certainly not—I do not pretend to "it—neither ought you to wiſh it. My "firſt attachment was the morbid exceſs "of a diſtempered imagination. Li- "berty, reaſon, virtue, uſefulneſs, were "the offerings I carried to its ſhrine. It "preyed inceſſantly upon my heart, it "drank up its vital ſpirit, it became a "vice from its exceſs—it was a pernici- "ous, though a ſublime, enthuſiaſm—its "ravages are ſcarcely to be remembered "without ſhuddering—all the ſtrength, "the dignity, the powers, of my mind, "melted before it! Do you wiſh again "to ſee me the ſlave of my paſſions—do "you regret, that I am reſtored to rea- "ſon? To you I owe every thing—life, "and its comforts, rational enjoyment, "and the opportunity of uſefulneſs. I "feel for you all the affection that a rea-

ſonable

"ſonable and a virtuous mind ought to "feel—that affection which is com- "patible with the fulfilling of other du- "ties. We are guilty of vice and ſelfiſh- "neſs when we yield ourſelves up to un- "bounded deſires, and ſuffer our hearts "to be wholly abſorbed by one object, "however meritorious that object may "be."

"Ah! how calmly you reaſon,—while "I liſten to you I cannot help loving and "admiring you, but I muſt ever hate that "accurſed Harley—No! *I am not ſatis-* "*fied*—and I ſometimes regret that I "ever beheld you."

Many months glided away with but little interruption to our tranquillity.—A remembrance of the paſt would at times obtrude itſelf, like the broken recollections of a feveriſh viſion. To baniſh theſe painful retroſpections, I haſtened to employ myſelf; every hour was devoted to active uſefulneſs, or to ſocial and rational recreation.

I became a mother; in performing the duties of a nurſe, my affections were awakened

awakened to new and ſweet emotions.—The father of my child appeared more reſpectable in my eyes, became more dear to me: the engaging ſmiles of my little Emma repayed me for every pain and every anxiety. While I beheld my huſband careſs his infant, I taſted a pure, a chaſte, an ineffable pleaſure.

CHAP. XIX.

ABOUT ſix weeks after my recovery from childbed, ſome affairs of importance called Mr. Montague to London. Three days after he had quitted me, as, bending over the cradle of my babe, I contemplated in ſilence its tranquil ſlumbers, I was alarmed by an uncommon confuſion in the lower part of the houſe. Haſtening down ſtairs, to enquire into the cauſe, I was informed—that a gentleman, in paſſing through the town, had been thrown from his horſe, that he was taken up ſenſeleſs, and, as

was

was cuſtomary in caſes of accident, had been brought into our houſe, that he might receive aſſiſtance.

Mr. Montague was from home, a young gentleman who reſided with us, and aſſiſted my huſband in his profeſſion, was alſo abſent, viſiting a patient. Having myſelf acquired ſome knowledge of ſurgery, I went immediately into the hall to give the neceſſary directions on the occaſion. The gentleman was lying on the floor, without any ſigns of life. I deſired the people to withdraw, who, crowding round with ſincere, but uſeleſs ſympathy, obſtructed the circulation of air. Approaching the unfortunate man, I inſtantly recogniſed the well-known features, though much altered, wan and ſunk, of *Auguſtus Harley*. Staggering a few paces backward—a death-like ſickneſs overſpread my heart—a crowd of confuſed and terrible emotions ruſhed through my mind.—But a momentary reflection recalled my ſcattered thoughts. Once before, I had ſaved from death an object ſo fatal to my repoſe. I exerted all

all my powers, his hair was clotted, and his face disfigured with blood; I ordered the ſervants to raiſe and carry him to an adjoining apartment, wherein was a large, low ſopha, on which they laid him. Carefully waſhing the blood from the wound, I found he had received a dangerous contuſion in his head, but that the ſcull, as I had at firſt apprehended, was not fractured. I cut the hair from the wounded part, and applied a proper bandage. I did more—no other aſſiſtance being at hand, I ventured to open a vein: the blood preſently flowed freely, and he began to revive. I bathed his temples, and ſprinked the room with vinegar, opened the windows to let the air paſs freely through, raiſed his head with the pillows of the ſopha, and ſprinkled his face and breaſt with cold water. I held his hand in mine—I felt the languid and wavering pulſe quicken—I fixed my eyes upon his face—at that moment every thing elſe was forgotten, and my nerves ſeemed firmly braced by my exertions.

He at length opened his eyes, gazed upon me with a vacant look, and vainly attempted, for ſome time, to ſpeak. At laſt, he uttered a few incoherent words, but I perceived his ſenſes were wandering, and I conjectured, too truly, that his brain had received a concuſſion. He made an effort to riſe, but ſunk down again.

"Where am I," ſaid he, "every ob-"ject appears to me double."

He ſhut his eyes, and remained ſilent. I mixed for him a cordial and compoſing medicine, and entreating him to take it, he once more raiſed himſelf, and looked up.—Our eyes met, his were wild and unſettled.

"That voice,"—ſaid he, in a low tone, —"that countenance—Oh God! where "am I?"

A ſtrong, but tranſient, emotion paſſed over his features. With a trembling hand he ſeized and ſwallowed the medicine I had offered, and again relapſed into a kind of lethargic ſtupor. I then gave orders for a bed to be prepared, into which

which I had him conveyed. I darkened the room, and desired, that he might be kept perfectly quiet.

—I retired to my apartment, my confinement was yet but recent, and I had not perfectly recovered my strength. Exhausted by the strong efforts I had made, and the stronger agitation of my mind, I sunk into a fainting fit, (to which I was by no means subject) and remained for some time in a state of perfect insensibility. On my recovery, I learnt that Mr. Lucas, the assistant of my husband, had returned, and was in the chamber of the stranger; I sent for him on his quitting the apartment, and eagerly interrogated him respecting the state of the patient. He shook his head—I related to him the methods I had taken, and enquired whether I had erred? He smiled——

"You are an excellent surgeon," said he, "you acted very properly, but," observing my pallid looks, "I wish your "little nursery may not suffer from your "humanity"—

"I lay no claim," replied I with emotion—"to extraordinary humanity.—"I would have done the ſame for "the pooreſt of my fellow creatures—"but this gentleman is an old acquaint-"ance, *a friend*, whom, in the early pe-"riods of my life, I greatly reſpected."

"I am ſorry for it, for I dare not "conceal from you, that I think him in "a dangerous condition."

I changed countenance—"There is no "fracture, no bones are broken."—

"No, but the brain has received an "alarming concuſſion—he is alſo, other-"wiſe, much bruiſed, and, I fear, has "ſuffered ſome internal injury."

"You diſtreſs and terrify me," ſaid I, gaſping for breath—"What is to be done "—ſhall we call in further advice?"

"I think ſo; in the mean time, if you "are acquainted with his friends, you "would do well to apprize them of what "has happened."

"I know little of them, I know not "where to addreſs them—Oh! ſave him," continued I, claſping my hands with en-

creaſed

creaſed emotion, unconſcious what I did, "for God's ſake ſave him, if you would "preſerve me from diſ——"

A look penetrating and curious from Lucas, recalled me to reaſon. Commending his patient to my care, he quitted me, and rode to the next town to procure the aid of a ſkilful and experienced Phyſician. I walked up and down the room for ſome time in a ſtate of diſtraction.

"He will die"—exclaimed I—"die in "my houſe—fatal accident! Oh, Auguſ- "tus! *too tenderly beloved*, thou wert fa- "ted to be the ruin of my peace! But, "whatever may be the conſequences, I "will perform, for thee, the laſt tender "offices.—I will not deſert my duty!"

The nurſe brought to me my infant, it ſmiled in my face—I preſſed it to my boſom—I wept over it.—How could I, from that agitated boſom, give it a pernicious ſuſtenance?

CHAP. XXI.

IN the evening, I repaired to the chamber of Mr. Harley, I ſat by his bed-ſide, I gazed mournfully on his fluſhed, but vacant countenance—I took his hand—it was dry and burning—the pulſe beat rapidly, but irregularly, beneath my trembling fingers. His lips moved, he ſeemed to ſpeak, though inarticulately—but ſometimes raiſing his voice, I could diſtinguiſh a few incoherent ſentences. In caſting my eyes round the room, I obſerved the ſcattered articles of his dreſs, his cloaths were black, and in his hat, which lay on the ground, I diſcovered a crape hatband. I continued to hold his burning hand in mine.

"She died,"—ſaid he—"and my un-
"kindneſskilled her—unhappy Emma—
"thy heart was too tender!"—I ſhuddered
"—No, no,"—continued he, after a few minutes pauſe, "ſhe is not married—ſhe
"dared not give her hand without her
"heart,

" heart, *and that heart was only mine!*" he added ſomething more, in a lower tone, which I was unable to diſtinguiſh.

Overcome by a variety of ſenſations, I ſunk into a chair, and, throwing my hand kerchief over my face, indulged my tears.

Sometimes he mentioned his wife, ſometimes his mother.——At length, ſpeaking rapidly, in a raiſed voice—" My " ſon,"—ſaid he,—" thou haſt no mo- " ther—but Emma will be a mother to " thee—ſhe will love thee—*ſhe loved thy* " *father*—her heart was the reſidence of " gentle affections—yet, I pierced that " heart!"

I ſuſpected, that a confuſed recollection of having ſeen me on recovering from the ſtate of inſenſibility, in which he had been brought, after the accident, into our houſe, had probably recalled the aſſociations formerly connected with this idea. The ſcene became too affecting: I ruſhed from the apartment. All the paſt impreſſions ſeemed to revive in my mind—my thoughts, with fatal mechaniſm, ran back into their old and accuſtomed channels.—

For a moment, conjugal, maternal, duties, every conſideration *but for one object* faded from before me!

In a few hours, Mr. Lucas returned with the phyſician;—I attended them to the chamber, heedfully watching their looks. The fever ſtill continued very high, accompanied with a labouring, unſteady pulſe, a difficult reſpiration, and ſtrong palpitations of the heart. The doctor ſaid little, but I diſcovered his apprehenſions in his countenance. The patient appeared particularly reſtleſs and uneaſy, and the delirium ſtill continued. On quitting the apartment, I earneſtly conjured the gentlemen to tell me their opinion of the caſe. They both expreſſed an apprehenſion of internal injury.

"But a ſhort time," they added, "would determine it; in the mean while "he muſt be kept perfectly ſtill."

I turned from them, and walked to the window—I raiſed my eyes to heaven—I breathed an involuntary ejaculation—I felt that the criſis of my fate was approaching, and I endeavoured to ſteel my

my nerves—to prepare my mind for the arduous duties which awaited me.

Mr. Lucas approached me, the phyſician having quitted the room.—"*Mrs. Montague*," ſaid he, in an emphatic tone—"in your ſympathy for a *ſtranger*, do not forget other relations."

"I do not need, ſir, to be reminded by you of my duties; were not the ſufferings of a fellow being a ſufficient claim upon our humanity, this gentleman has *more affecting claims*—I am neither a ſtranger to him, nor to his virtues."

"So I perceive, madam," ſaid he, with an air a little ſarcaſtic, "I wiſh, Mr. Montague were here to participate your cares."

"I wiſh he were, ſir, his generous nature would not diſallow them." I ſpoke haughtily, and abruptly left him.

I took a turn in the garden, endeavouring to compoſe my ſpirits, and, after viſiting the nurſery, returned to the chamber of Mr. Harley. I there found Mr. Lucas, and in a ſteady tone, declared

my intention of watching his patient through the night.

"As you pleaſe, madam," ſaid he coldly.

I ſeated myſelf in an eaſy chair, reclining my head on my hand. The bed curtains were undrawn on the ſide next me. Auguſtus frequently ſtarted, as from broken ſlumbers; his reſpiration grew, every moment, more difficult and laborious, and, ſometimes, he groaned heavily, as if in great pain. Once he ſuddenly raiſed himſelf in the bed, and, gazing wildly round the room, exclaimed in a diſtinct, but hurried tone——

"Why doſt thou perſecute me with "thy ill-fated tenderneſs? A fathomleſs "gulf ſeparates us!—Emma!" added he, in a plaintive voice, "*doſt thou, indeed, ſtill* "*love me*?" and, heaving a convulſive "ſigh, ſunk again on his pillow.

Mr. Lucas, who ſtood at the feet of the bed, turned his eye on me. I met his glance with the ſteady aſpect of conſcious rectitude. About midnight, our patient grew worſe, and, after ſtrong agonies.

nies, was ſeized with a vomiting of blood. The fears of the phyſician were but too well verified, he had again ruptured the blood-veſſel, once before broken.

Mr. Lucas had but juſt retired, I ordered him to be inſtantly recalled; and, ſtifling every feeling, that might incapacitate me for active exertion, I rendered him all the aſſiſtance in my power—I neither trembled, nor ſhed a tear—I baniſhed the *woman* from my heart—I acquitted myſelf with a firmneſs that would not have diſgraced the moſt experienced, and veteran ſurgeon. My ſervices were materially uſeful, my ſolicitude vanquiſhed every ſhrinking ſenſibility, *affection had converted me into a heroine!* The hæmorrhage continued, at intervals, all the next day: I paſſed once or twice from the chamber to the nurſery, and immediately returned. We called in a conſultation, but little hope was afforded.

The next night, Mr. Lucas and myſelf continued to watch—towards morning our exhauſted patient ſunk into an apparently tranquil ſlumber. Mr. Lucas

intreated me to retire and take ſome repoſe, on my refuſal, he availed himſelf of the opportunity, and went to his apartment, deſiring to be called if any change ſhould take place. The nurſe ſlept ſoundly in her chair, I alone remained watching—I felt neither fatigue nor languor—my ſtrength ſeemed preſerved as by a miracle, ſo omnipotent is the operation of moral cauſes!

Silence reigned throughout the houſe; I hung over the object of my tender cares—his features were ſerene—but his cheeks and lips were pale and bloodleſs. From time to time I took his lifeleſs hand—a low, fluttering, pulſe, ſometimes ſeeming to ſtop, and then to vibrate with a tremulous motion, but too plainly juſtified my fears—his breath, though leſs laborious, was quick and ſhort—a cold dew hung upon his temples—I gently wiped them with my handkerchief, and preſſed my lips to his forehead. Yet, at that moment, that ſolemn moment—while I beheld the object of my virgin affections—whom I had loved with a tenderneſs

derneſs, 'paſſing the love of woman'—expiring before my eyes—I forgot not that I was a wife and a mother.—The purity of my feelings ſanctified their enthuſiaſm!

The day had far advanced, though the houſe ſtill remained quiet, when Auguſtus, after a deep drawn ſigh, opened his eyes. The loſs of blood had calmed the delirium, and though he regarded me attentively, and with evident ſurprize, the wildneſs of his eyes and countenance had given place to their accuſtomed ſteady expreſſion. He ſpoke in a faint voice.

"Where am I, how came I here?"

I drew nearer to him—"An unfortu-
"nate accident has thrown you into the
"care of kind friends—you have been
"very ill—it is not proper that you
"ſhould exert yourſelf—rely on thoſe to
"whom your ſafety is precious."

He looked at me as I ſpoke—his eyes gliſtened—he breathed a half ſmothered ſigh, but attempted not to reply. He continued to doze at intervals throughout the day, but evidently grew weaker every

hour—I quitted him not for a moment, even my nurſery was forgotten. I ſat, or knelt, at the bed's head, and, between his ſhort and broken ſlumbers, adminiſtered cordial medicines. He ſeemed to take them with pleaſure from my hand, and a mournful tenderneſs at times beamed in his eyes. I neither ſpake nor wept—my ſtrength appeared equal to every trial.

In the evening, ſtarting from a troubled ſleep, he fell into convulſions—I kept my ſtation—our efforts were ſucceſsful—he again revived. I ſupported the pillows on which his head reclined, ſprinkled the bed-cloaths, and bathed his temples, with hungary water, while I wiped from them the damps of death. A few tears at length forced their way, they fell upon his hand, which reſted on the pillow—he kiſſed them off, and raiſed to mine his languid eyes, in which death was already painted.

The blood forſaking the extremities, ruſhed wildly to my heart, a ſtrong pal- ſeized it, my fortitude had well nigh

nigh forſaken me. But I had been habituated to ſubdue my feelings, and ſhould I ſuffer them to diſturb the laſt moments of him, *who had taught me this painful leſſon?* He made a ſign for a cordial, an attendant offering one—he waved his hand and turned from her his face—I took it—held it to his lips, and he inſtantly drank it. Another ſtrong emotion ſhook my nerves—once more I ſtruggled and gained the victory. He ſpoke in feeble and interrupted periods—kneeling down, ſcarce daring to breathe, I liſtened.

"I have a ſon"—ſaid he,—"I am "dying—he will have no longer a pa-"rent—transfer to him a portion of—"

"I comprehend you—ſay no more—"*he is mine*—I adopt him—where ſhall I "find———?"

He pointed to his cloaths—"a pocket "book"—ſaid he, in accents ſtill fainter.

"Enough!—I ſwear, in this awful "moment, never to forſake him."

He raiſed my hand to his lips—a tender ſmile illumined his countenance—"Surely," ſaid he, "I have ſufficiently "fulfilled

"fulfilled the dictates of a rigid honour!
"—In theſe laſt moments—when every
"earthly tie is diſſolving—when human
"inſtitutions fade before my ſight—I
"may, without a crime, tell you—*that I*
"*have loved you.*—Your tenderneſs early
"penetrated my heart—aware of its
"weakneſs—I ſought to ſhun you—I
"impoſed on myſelf thoſe ſevere laws of
"which you cauſeleſsly complained.—
"Had my conduct been leſs rigid, I had
"been loſt—I had been unjuſt to the
"bonds which I had voluntarily con-
"tracted; and which, therefore, had on
"me indiſpenſible claims. I acted from
"good motives, but no doubt, was guilty
"of ſome errors—yet, my conflicts were,
"even, more cruel than yours—I had not
"only to contend againſt my own ſenſi-
"bility, but againſt yours alſo.—The fire
"which is pent up burns the fierceſt!"—

He ceaſed to ſpeak—a tranſient glow, which had lighted up his countenance, faded—exhauſted, by the ſtrong effort he had made, he ſunk back—his eyes grew dim—they cloſed—*their laſt light beamed*

beamed on me!—I caught him in my arms—and—*he awoke no more.* The ſpirits, that had hitherto ſupported me, ſuddenly ſubſided. I uttered a piercing ſhriek, and ſunk upon the body.

CHAP. XXII.

MANY weeks paſſed of which I have no remembrance, they were a blank in my life—a long life of ſorrow! When reſtored to recollection, I found myſelf in my own chamber, my huſband attending me. It was a long time before I could clearly retrace the images of the paſt. I learned———

'That I had been ſeized with a nervous fever, in conſequence of having exerted myſelf beyond my ſtrength; that my head had been diſordered; that Mr. Montague on his return, finding me in this ſituation, of which Mr. Lucas had explained

plained the cauſes, had been abſorbed in deep affliction; that, inattentive to every other concern, he had ſcarcely quitted my apartment; that my child had been ſent out to nurſe; and that my recovery had been deſpaired of.'

My conſtitution was impaired by theſe repeated ſhocks. I continued ſeveral months in a low and debilitated ſtate.—With returning reaſon, I recalled to my remembrance the charge which Auguſtus had conſigned to me in his laſt moments. I enquired earneſtly for the pocket-book he had mentioned, and was informed, that, after his deceaſe, it had been found, and its contents examined, which were a bank note of fifty pounds, ſome letters, and memorandums. Among the letters was one from his brother, by which means they had learned his addreſs, and had been enabled to tranſmit to him an account of the melancholy cataſtrophe, and to requeſt his orders reſpecting the diſpoſal of the body. On the receipt of this intelligence, the younger Mr. Harley had come immediately into ——— ſhire, had received

received his brother's effects, and had his remains decently and reſpectfully interred in the town where the fatal accident had taken place, through which he was paſſing in his way to viſit a friend.

As ſoon as I had ſtrength to hold a pen, I wrote to this gentleman, mentioning the tender office which had been conſigned to me; and requeſting that the child, or children, of Mr. Auguſtus Harley might be conſigned to my care. To this letter I received an anſwer, in a few days, hinting—

'That the marriage of my deceaſed friend had not been more imprudent than unfortunate; that he had ſtruggled with great difficulties and many ſorrows; that his wife had been dead near a twelvemonth; that he had loſt two of his children, about the ſame period, with the ſmall-pox, one only ſurviving, the younger, a ſon, a year and a half old; that it was, at preſent, at nurſe, under his (his brother's) protection; that his reſpect for me, and knowledge of my friendſhip for their family, added to his

wiſh

wiſh of complying with every requeſt of his deceaſed brother, prevented him from heſitating a moment reſpecting the propriety of yielding the child to my care; that it ſhould be delivered to any perſon whom I ſhould commiſſion for the purpoſe; and that I might draw upon him for the neceſſary charges towards the ſupport and education of his nephew.'

I mentioned to Mr. Montague theſe particulars, with a deſire of availing myſelf of his counſel and aſſiſtance on the occaſion.

"You are free, madam," he replied, with a cold and diſtant air, "to act as "you ſhall think proper; but you muſt "excuſe me from making myſelf reſponſible in the affair."

I ſighed deeply. I perceived, but too plainly, that *a mortal blow was given to my tranquillity*; but I determined to perſevere in what I conſidered to be my duty. On the retroſpect of my conduct, my heart acquitted me; and I endeavoured to ſubmit, without repining, to my fate.

I was

I was, at this period, informed by a faithful ſervant, who attended me during my illneſs, of what I had before but too truly conjectured—That in my delirium I had inceſſantly called upon the name of Auguſtus Harley, and repeated, at intervals, in broken language, the circumſtances of our laſt tender and fatal interview: this, with ſome particulars related by Mr. Lucas to Mr. Montague on his return, had, it ſeems, at the time, inflamed the iraſcible paſſions of my huſband, almoſt to madneſs. His tranſports had ſubſided, by degrees, into gloomy reſerve: he had watched me, till my recovery, with unremitting attention; ſince which his confidence and affection became, every day, more viſibly alienated. Self-reſpect ſuppreſſed my complaints—conſcious of deſerving, even more than ever, his eſteem, I bore his caprice with patience, truſting that time, and my conduct, would reſtore him to reaſon, and awaken in his heart a ſenſe of juſtice.

I ſent for my babe from the houſe of the nurſe, to whoſe care it had been confided

fided during my illneſs, and placed the little Auguſtus in its ſtead. "It is unneceſſary, my friend, to ſay, that you were that lovely and intereſting child. —Oh! with what emotion did I receive, and preſs, you to my care-worn boſom; retracing in your ſmiling countenance the features of your unfortunate father! Adopting you for my own, I divided my affection between you and my Emma. Scarce a day paſſed that I did not viſit the cottage of your nurſe. I taught you to call me by the endearing name of *mother!* I delighted to ſee you careſs my infant with fraternal tenderneſs——I endeavoured to cheriſh this growing affection, and found a ſweet relief from my ſorrows in theſe tender, maternal, cares."

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

MY health being conſiderably injured, I had taken a young woman into my houſe, to aſſiſt me in the nurſery, and in other domeſtic offices. She was in her eighteenth year—ſimple, modeſt, and innocent. This girl had reſided with me for ſome months. I had been kind to her, and ſhe ſeemed attached to me. One morning, going ſuddenly into Mr. Montague's dreſſing-room, I ſurpriſed Rachael ſitting on a ſopha with her maſter:—he held her hand in his, while his arm was thrown round her waiſt; and they appeared to be engaged in earneſt converſation. They both ſtarted, on my entrance:——Unwilling to encreaſe their confuſion, I quitted the room.

Montague, on our meeting at dinner, affected an air of unconcern; but there was an apparent conſtraint in his behaviour. I preſerved towards him my accuſtomed manner, till the ſervants had withdrawn.

drawn. I then mildly expoſtulated with him on the impropriety of his behaviour. His replies were not more unkind than ungenerous—they pierced my heart.

"It is well, ſir, I am inured to ſuffer-
"ing; but it is not of *myſelf* that I would
"ſpeak. I have not deſerved to loſe
"your confidence—this is my conſola-
"tion;—yet, I ſubmit to it:——but I
"cannot ſee you act in a manner, that
"will probably involve you in vexation,
"and intail upon you remorſe, without
"warning you of your danger. Should
"you corrupt the innocence of this girl,
"ſhe is emphatically *ruined*. It is the
"ſtrong mind only, that, firmly reſting
"on its own powers, can ſuſtain and re-
"cover itſelf amidſt the world's ſcorn and
"injuſtice. The morality of an unculti-
"vated underſtanding, is that of *cuſtom*,
"not of reaſon:—break down the feeble
"barrier, and there is nothing to ſupply
"its place——you open the flood-gates
"of infamy and wretchedneſs. Who can
"ſay where the evil may ſtop?"

"You

"You are at liberty to diſcharge your "ſervant, when you pleaſe, madam."

"I think it my duty to do ſo, Mr. "Montague—not on my own, but on "*her*, account. If I have no claim upon "your affection and principles, I would "diſdain to watch your conduct. But "I feel myſelf attached to this young "woman, and would wiſh to preſerve "her from deſtruction!"

"You are very generous; but as you "thought fit to beſtow on me your *hand*, "when your *heart* was devoted to ano-"ther———"

"It is enough, ſir!—To your juſtice, "only, in your cooler moments, would "I appeal!"

I procured for Rachel a reputable place, in a diſtant part of the county.—Before ſhe quitted me, I ſeriouſly, and affectionately, remonſtrated with her on the conſequences of her behaviour. She anſwered me only with tears and bluſhes.

In vain I tried to rectify the principles, and ſubdue the cruel prejudices, of my huſband. I endeavoured to ſhew him

every mark of affection and confidence. I frequently expoſtulated with him, upon his conduct, with tears—urged him to reſpect himſelf and me—ſtrove to convince him of the falſe principles upon which he acted—of the ſenſeleſs and barbarous manner in which he was ſacrificing my peace, and his own, to a romantic chimera. Sometimes he would appear, for a moment, melted with my tender and fervent entreaties.

"Would to God!" he would ſay, with emotion, "the laſt ſix months of my life "could be obliterated for ever from my "remembrance!"

He was no longer active, and chearful: he would ſit, for hours, involved in deep and gloomy ſilence. When I brought the little Emma, to ſoften, by her engaging careſſes, the anxieties by which his ſpirits appeared to be overwhelmed, he would gaze wildly upon her—ſnatch her to his breaſt—and then, ſuddenly throwing her from him, ruſh out of the houſe; and, inattentive to the duties of his profeſſion, abſent himſelf for days and nights together

together:—his temper grew, every hour, more furious and unequal.

He by accident, one evening, met the little Auguſtus, as his nurſe was carrying him from my apartment; and, breaking rudely into the room, overwhelmed me with a torrent of abuſe and reproaches. I ſubmitted to his injuſtice with ſilent grief —my ſpirits were utterly broken. At times, he would ſeem to be ſenſible of the impropriety of his conduct—would execrate himſelf, and entreat my forgiveneſs; ——but quickly relapſed into his accuſtomed paroxyſms, which, from having been indulged, were now become habitual, and uncontroulable. Theſe agitations ſeemed daily to encreaſe—all my efforts to regain his confidence—my patient, unremitted, attentions—were fruitleſs. He ſhunned me—he appeared, even, to regard me with horror. I wept in ſilence. The hours which I paſſed with my children afforded me my only conſolation—they became painfully dear to me. Attending to their little ſports,

and innocent gambols, I forgot, for a moment, my griefs.

CHAP. XXIV.

SOME months thus paſſed away, with little variation in my ſituation. Returning home one morning, early, from the nurſe's, where I had left my Emma with Auguſtus (whom I never, now, permitted to be brought to my own houſe) as I entered, Mr. Montague ſhot ſuddenly by me, and ruſhed up ſtairs towards his apartment. I ſaw him but tranſiently, as he paſſed; but his haggard countenance, and furious geſtures, filled me with diſmay. He had been from home the preceding night; but to theſe abſences I had lately been too much accuſtomed to regard them as any thing extraordinary. I heſitated a few moments, whether I ſhould follow him. I feared,

feared, leſt I might exaſperate him by ſo doing; yet, the unuſual diſorder of his appearance gave me a thouſand terrible and nameleſs apprehenſions. I crept towards the door of his apartment—liſtened attentively, and heard him walking up and down the room, with haſty ſteps—ſometimes he appeared to ſtop, and groaned heavily:——once I heard him throw up the ſaſh, and ſhut it again with violence.

I attempted to open the door, but, finding it locked, my terror increaſed.—I knocked gently, but could not attract his attention. At length I recollected another door, that led to this apartment, through my own chamber, which was faſtened on the outſide, and ſeldom opened. With trembling ſteps I hurried round, and, on entering the room, beheld him ſitting at a table, a pen in his hand, and paper before him. On the table lay his piſtols—his hair was diſhevelled—his dreſs diſordered—his features diſtorted with emotion—while in his countenance was painted the extreme of horror and deſpair.

I uttered a faint ſhriek, and ſunk into a chair. He ſtarted from his ſeat, and, advancing towards me with hurried and tremulous ſteps, ſternly demanded, Why I intruded on his retirement? I threw myſelf at his feet,—I folded my arms round him—I wept—I deprecated his anger—I entreated to be heard—I ſaid all that humanity, all that the moſt tender and lively ſympathy could ſuggeſt, to inſpire him with confidence—to induce him to relieve, by communication, the burthen which oppreſſed his heart. —He ſtruggled to free himſelf from me —my apprehenſions gave me ſtrength— I held him with a ſtrenuous graſp—he raved—he ſtamped—he tore his hair— his paſſion became frenzy! At length, forcibly burſting from me, I fell on the floor, and the blood guſhed from my noſe and lips. He ſhuddered convulſively—ſtood a few moments, as if irreſolute—and, then, throwing himſelf beſide me, raiſed me from the ground; and, claſping me to his heart, which throbbed tumultuouſly, burſt into a flood of tears.

"I will

"I will not be thy *murderer*, Emma!" ſaid he, in a voice of agony, interrupted by heart-rending ſobs——"I have had "enough of blood!"

I tried to ſooth him—I aſſured him I was not hurt—I beſought him to confide his ſorrows to the faithful boſom of his wife! He appeared ſoftened—his tears flowed without controul.

"Unhappy woman!—you know not "what you aſk! To be ingenuous, be- "longs to purity like yours!——Guilt, "black as hell!—conſcious, aggravated, "damnable, guilt!—*Your fatal attach-* "*ment*—my accurſed jealouſy!——Ah! "Emma! I have injured you—but you "are, indeed, revenged!"

Every feature ſeemed to work—ſeemed pregnant with dreadful meaning—he was relapſing into frenzy.

"Be calm, my friend—be not unjuſt "to yourſelf—you can have committed "no injury that I ſhall not willingly for- "give—you are incapable of perſiſting "in guilt. The ingenuous mind, that "avows, has already made half the repa-

"ration. Suffer me to learn the ſource
"of your inquietude! I may find much
"to extenuate—I may be able to con-
"vince you, that you are too ſevere to
"yourſelf."

"Never, never, never!—nothing can
"extenuate—*the expiation muſt be made!*
"—Excellent, admirable, woman!—Re-
"member, without hating, the wretch
"who has been unworthy of you—who
"could not conceive, who knew not
"how to eſtimate, your virtues!—Oh!
"do not—do not"—ſtraining me to his
boſom—"curſe my memory!"

He ſtarted from the ground, and, in a moment, was out of ſight.

I raiſed myſelf with difficulty—faint, tottering, gaſping for breath, I attempted to deſcend the ſtairs. I had ſcarcely reached the landing-place, when a violent knocking at the door ſhook my whole frame. I ſtood ſtill, clinging to the baluſtrade, unable to proceed. I heard a chaiſe draw up—a ſervant opening the door—a plain-looking countryman alighted, and deſired inſtantly to ſpeak

to

to the lady of the houſe—his buſineſs was, he ſaid, of life and death! I advanced towards him, pale and trembling!

"What is the matter, my friend—"whence came you?"

"I cannot ſtop, lady, to explain my-"ſelf—you muſt come with me—I will "tell you more as we go along."

"Do you come," enquired I, in a voice ſcarcely articulate, "from my huſband?"

"No—no—I come from a perſon who "is dying, who has ſomewhat of conſe-"quence to impart to you——Haſten, "lady—there is no time to loſe!"

"Lead, then, I follow you."

He helped me into the chaiſe, and we drove off with the rapidity of lightning.

CHAP. XXV.

I ASKED no more queſtions on the road, but attempted to fortify my mind for the ſcenes which, I foreboded,

were approaching. After about an hour's ride, we ſtopped at a ſmall, neat, cottage, emboſomed in trees, ſtanding alone, at a conſiderable diſtance from the high-road. A decent-looking, elderly, woman, came to the door, at the ſound of the carriage, and aſſiſted me to alight. In her countenance were evident marks of perturbation and horror. I aſked for a glaſs of water; and, having drank it, followed the woman, at her requeſt, up ſtairs. She ſeemed inclined to talk, but I gave her no encouragement——I knew not what awaited me, nor what exertions might be requiſite—I determined not to exhauſt my ſpirits unneceſſarily.

On entering a ſmall chamber, I obſerved a bed, with the curtains cloſely drawn. I advanced towards it, and, unfolding them, beheld the unhappy Rachel lying in a ſtate of apparent inſenſibility.

"She is dying," whiſpered the woman, "ſhe has been in ſtrong convulſions; but "ſhe could not die in peace without ſee-"ing Madam Montague, and obtaining "her forgiveneſs."

I approach-

I approached the unfortunate girl, and took her lifeleſs hand.—A feeble pulſe ſtill trembled—I gazed upon her, for ſome moments, in ſilence.———She heaved a deep ſigh—her lips moved, inarticulately. She, at length, opened her eyes, and, fixing them upon me, the blood ſeemed to ruſh through her languid frame—reanimating it. She ſprung up in the bed, and, claſping her hands together, uttered a few incoherent words.

"Be pacified, my dear—I am not an-
"gry with you—I feel only pity."

She looked wildly. "Ah! my dear
"lady, I am a wicked girl—but not—
"Oh, no!—*not a murderer!* I did not
"———indeed, I did not———murder my
"child!"

A cold tremor ſeized me—I turned heart-ſick—a ſenſation of horror thrilled through my veins!

"My dear, my kind miſtreſs," reſumed the wretched girl, "can you for-
"give me?———Oh! that cruel, bar-
"barous, man!—It was *he* who did it—

" indeed, it was *he* who did it!" Diſtraction glared in her eyes.

" I do forgive you," ſaid I, in broken accents. " I will take care of you—but " you muſt be calm."

" I will—I will"—replied ſhe, in a rapid tone of voice—" but do not ſend " me to priſon—*I did not murder it!*— " Oh! my child, my child!" continued ſhe, in a ſcreaming tone of frantic violence, and was again ſeized with ſtrong convulſions.

We adminiſtered all the aſſiſtance in our power. I endeavoured, with ſucceſs, to ſtifle my emotions in the active duties of humanity. Rachel once more revived. After earneſtly recommending her to the care of the good woman of the houſe, and promiſing to ſend medicines and nouriſhment proper for her ſituation, and to reward their attentions—deſiring that ſhe might be kept perfectly ſtill, and not be ſuffered to talk on ſubjects that agitated her—I quitted the place, preſaging but too much, and not having, at

that

that time, the courage to make further enquiries.

CHAP. XXVI.

ON entering my own houſe my heart miſgave me. I enquired, with trepidation, for my huſband, and was informed—'That he had returned ſoon after my departure, and had ſhut himſelf in his apartment; that, on being followed by Mr. Lucas, he had turned fiercely upon him, commanding him, in an imperious tone, inſtantly to leave him; adding, he had affairs of importance to tranſact; and ſhould any one dare to intrude on him, it would be at the peril of their lives.' All the family appeared in conſternation, but no one had preſumed to diſobey the orders of their maſter.—They expreſſed their ſatisfaction at my return—Alas! I was impotent to relieve

the apprehenſions which, I too plainly perceived, had taken poſſeſſion of their minds.

I retired to my chamber, and, with a trembling hand, traced, and addreſſed to my huſband, a few incoherent lines—briefly hinting my ſuſpicions reſpecting the late tranſactions—exhorting him to provide for his ſafety, and offering to be the companion of his flight. I added—"Let us reap wiſdom from theſe tragical conſequences of *indulged paſſion!* It is not to atone for the paſt error, by cutting off the proſpect of future uſefulneſs—Repentance for what can never be recalled, is abſurd and vain, but as it affords a leſſon for the time to come—do not let us wilfully forfeit the fruits of our dear-bought experience! I will never reproach you! Virtuous reſolution, and time, may yet heal theſe aggravated wounds. Dear Montague, be no longer the ſlave of error; inflict not on my tortured mind new, and more inſupportable, terrors! I await your directions—let us fly—let us ſummon our fortitude—let

us,

us, at length, bravely ſtem the tide of paſſion—let us beware of the criminal puſillanimity of deſpair!"

With faultering ſteps, I ſought the apartment of my huſband. I liſtened a moment at the door—and hearing him in motion, while profound ſighs burſt every inſtant from his boſom, I ſlid my paper under the door, unfolded, that it might be the more likely to attract his attention. Preſently, I had the ſatisfaction of hearing him take it up. After ſome minutes, a ſlip of paper was returned, by the ſame method which I had adopted, in which was written, in characters blotted, and ſcarcely legible, the following words—

"Leave me, one half hour, to my reflections: at the end of that period, be aſſured, I will ſee, or write, to you."

I knew him to be incapable of falſehood—my heart palpitated with hope. I went to my chamber, and paſſed the interval in a thouſand cruel reflections, and vague plans for our ſudden departure. Near an hour had elapſed, when the bell rang.

I ſtarted,

I ſtarted, breathleſs, from my ſeat. A ſervant paſſed my door, to take his maſter's orders. He returned inſtantly, and, meeting me in the paſſage, delivered to me a letter. I heard Montague again lock the door.——Diſappointed, I re-entered my chamber. In my haſte to get at the contents of the paper, I almoſt tore it in pieces—the words ſwam before my ſight. I held it for ſome moments in my hand, incapable of decyphering the fatal characters. I breathed with difficulty—all the powers of life ſeemed ſuſpended—when the report of a piſtol rouſed me to a ſenſe of confuſed horror. —Ruſhing forward, I burſt, with preternatural ſtrength, into the apartment of my huſband———What a ſpectacle! —Aſſiſtance was vain!———Montague —the impetuous, ill-fated, Montague—*was no more—was a mangled corpſe!*—Raſh, unfortunate, young, man!

But, why ſhould I harrow up your ſuſceptible mind, by dwelling on theſe cruel ſcenes? *Ah! ſuffer me to ſpread a veil over this fearful cataſtrophe!* Some time

elapſed ere I had fortitude to examine the paper addreſſed to me by my unfortunate huſband. Its contents, which were as follows, affected me with deep and mingled emotions.

TO MRS. MONTAGUE.

"AMIDST the reflections which preſs, by turns, upon my burning brain, an obſcure conſciouſneſs of the prejudices upon which my character has been formed, is not the leaſt torturing—becauſe I feel *the inveterate force of habit* —I feel, that my convictions come too late!

"I have deſtroyed myſelf, and you, deareſt, moſt generous, and moſt unfortunate, of women! I am a monſter!—I have ſeduced innocence, and embrued my hands in blood!——Oh, God!—Oh, God!——*'Tis there diſtraction lies!* —I would, circumſtantially, retrace my errors; but my diſordered mind, and quivering hand, refuſe the cruel taſk—yet,

yet, it is neceſſary that I ſhould attempt a brief ſketch.

"After the cruel accident, which deſtroyed our tranquillity, I nouriſhed my ſenſeleſs jealouſies (the ſources of which I need not, now, recapitulate), till I perſuaded myſelf—injurious wretch that I was!—that I had been perfidiouſly and ungenerouſly treated. Stung by falſe pride, I tried to harden my heart, and fooliſhly thirſted for revenge. Your meekneſs, and magnanimity, diſappointed me.—I would willingly have ſeen you, not only ſuffer the PANGS, but expreſs the *rage*, of a ſlighted wife. The ſimple victim of my baſeneſs, by the artleſs affection ſhe expreſſed for me, gained an aſcendency over my mind; and, when you removed her from your houſe, we ſtill contrived, at times, to meet. The conſequences of our intercourſe could not long be concealed. It was, then, that I firſt began to open my eyes on my conduct, and to be ſeized with remorſe!—Rachel, now, wept inceſſantly. Her father, ſhe told me, was a ſtern and ſevere

vere man; and ſhould he hear of her miſconduct, would, ſhe was certain, be her deſtruction.' I procured for her an obſcure retreat, to which I removed the unhappy girl [Oh, how degrading is vice!], under falſe pretences. I exhorted her to conceal her ſituation—to pretend, that her health was in a declining ſtate—and I viſited her, from time to time, as in my profeſſion.

"This poor young creature continued to bewail the diſgrace ſhe anticipated—her lamentations pierced my ſoul! I recalled to my remembrance your emphatic caution. I foreſaw that, with the loſs of her character, this ſimple girl's misfortune and degradation would be irretrievable; and I could, now, plainly diſtinguiſh the morality of *rule* from that of *principle*. Purſuing this train of reaſoning, I entangled myſelf, for my views were not yet ſufficiently clear and comprehenſible! Bewildered, amidſt contending principles—diſtracted by a variety of emotions—in ſeeking a remedy for one vice, I plunged (as is but too common),

into

into others of a more ſcarlet dye. With ſhame and horror, I confeſs, I repeatedly tried, by medical drugs, to procure an abortive birth: the ſtrength and vigour of Rachel's conſtitution defeated this diabolical purpoſe. Foiled in theſe attempts, I became hardened, deſperate, and barbarous!

"Six weeks before the allotted period, the infant ſaw the light—for a moment—to cloſe its eyes on it for ever! I, only, was with the unhappy mother. I had formed no deliberate purpoſe—I had not yet arrived at the acme of guilt—but, perceiving, from the babe's premature birth, and the conſequences of the pernicious potions which had been adminiſtered to the mother, that the vital flame played but feebly—that life was but as a quivering, uncertain, ſpark—a ſudden and terrible thought darted through my mind. I know not whether my emotion betrayed me to the ear of Rachel—but, ſuddenly throwing back the curtain of the bed, ſhe beheld me graſp—with ſavage ferocity—*with murderous hands!*—

Springing

Springing from the bed, and throwing herſelf upon me—her piercing ſhrieks—

"*I can no more*—of the reſt you ſeem, from whatever means, but too well informed!

"I need not ſay—protect, if ſhe ſurvive, the miſerable mother!—To you, whoſe heavenly goodneſs I have ſo ill requited, it would be injurious as unneceſſary! I read, too late, the heart I have inſulted!

"I have ſettled the diſpoſal of my effects—I have commanded my feelings to give you this laſt, ſad, proof of my confidence.—*Kneeling*, I entreat your forgiveneſs for the ſufferings I have cauſed you! I found your heart wounded—and into thoſe feſtering wounds I infuſed a deadly venom—curſe not my memory—*We meet no more.*

"Farewel! firſt, and laſt, and only, beloved of women!—a long—a long farewel!

"MONTAGUE."

Theſe

Theſe are the conſequences of confuſed ſyſtems of morals—and thus it is, that minds of the higheſt hope, and faireſt proſpect, are blaſted!

CHAP. XXVII.

THE unhappy Rachel recovered her health by ſlow degrees. I had determined, when my affairs were ſettled, to leave a ſpot, that had been the ſcene of ſo many tragical events. I propoſed to the poor girl to take her again into my family, to which ſhe acceded with rapture. She has never ſince quitted me, and her faithful ſervices, and humble, grateful attachment, have repaid my protection an hundred fold.

Mr. Montague left ten thouſand pounds, the half of which was ſettled on his daughter, the remainder left to my diſpoſal. This determined me to adopt you

you wholly for my ſon. I wrote to your uncle to that purport, taking upon myſelf the entire charge of your education, and entreating, that you might never know, unleſs informed by myſelf, to whom you owed your birth. That you ſhould continue to think me *your mother*, flattered my tenderneſs, nor was my Emma, herſelf, more dear to me.

I retired in a few months to my preſent reſidence, ſharing my heart and my attentions between my children, who grew up under my foſtering care, lovely and beloved.

"While every day, ſoft as it roll'd along,
"Shew'd ſome new charm."

I obſerved your affection for each other with a flattering preſage. With the features of your father, you inherited his intrepidity, and manly virtues—even, at times, I thought I perceived the ſeeds of his inflexible ſpirit: but the careſſes of my Emma, more fortunate than her mother—

yet,

yet, with all her mother's ſenſibility—could, in an inſtant, ſoften you to tenderneſs, and melt you into infantine ſweetneſs.

I endeavoured to form your young minds to every active virtue, to every generous ſentiment.—You received, from the ſame maſters, the ſame leſſons, till you attained your twelfth year; and my Emma emulated, and ſometimes outſtripped your progreſs. I obſerved, with a mixture of hope and ſolicitude, her lively capacity—her enthuſiaſtic affections; while I laboured to moderate and regulate them.

It now became neceſſary that your educations ſhould take a ſomewhat different direction; I wiſhed to fit you for a commercial line of life; but the ardor you diſcovered for ſcience and literature occaſioned me ſome perplexity, as I feared it might unfit you for application to trade, in the purſuit of which ſo many talents are ſwallowed up, and powers waſted. Yet, to the profeſſions my objections were ſtill more ſerious.—The ſtudy of law, is the

ſtudy

ſtudy of chicanery.—The church, the ſchool of hypocriſy and uſurpation! You could only enter the univerſities by a moral degradation, that muſt check the freedom, and contaminate the purity, of the mind, and, entangling it in an inexplicable maze of error and contradiction, *poiſon virtue at its ſource*, and lay the foundation for a duplicity of character and a perverſion of reaſon, deſtructive of every manly principle of integrity. For the ſcience of phyſic you expreſſed a diſinclination. A neighbouring gentleman, a ſurveyor, a man high in his profeſſion, and of liberal manners, to whoſe friendſhip I was indebted, offered to take you. You were delighted with this propoſal, (to which I had no particular objection) as you had a taſte for drawing and architecture.

Our ſeparation, though you were to reſide in the ſame town, coſt us many tears —I loved you with more than a mother's fondneſs—and my Emma clung round the neck of her beloved brother, her Auguſtus, her playfellow, and ſobbed on his

his boſom. It was with difficulty that you could diſentangle yourſelf from our embraces. Every moment of leiſure you flew to us—my Emma learned from you to draw plans, and to ſtudy the laws of proportion. Every little exuberance in your diſpoſition, which, generated by a noble pride, ſometimes wore the features of aſperity, was ſoothed into peace by her gentleneſs and affection: while ſhe delighted to emulate your fortitude, and to riſe ſuperior to the feebleneſs foſtered in her ſex, under the ſpecious name of delicacy. Your mutual attachment encreaſed with your years, I renewed my exiſtence in my children, and anticipated their more perfect union.

Ah! my ſon, need I proceed? Muſt I continually blot the page with the tale of ſorrow? Can I tear open again, can I cauſe to bleed afreſh, in your heart and my own, wounds ſcarcely cloſed? In her fourteenth year, in the ſpring of life, your Emma and mine, lovely and fragile bloſſom, was blighted by a killing froſt—After

ter a few days illneſs, ſhe drooped, faded, languiſhed, and died!

It was now that I felt—'That no agonies were like the agonies of a mother.' My broken ſpirits, from theſe repeated ſorrows, ſunk into habitual, hopeleſs, dejection. Proſpects, that I had meditated with ineffable delight, were for ever veiled in darkneſs. Every earthly tie was broken, except that which bound you to my deſolated heart with a ſtill ſtronger cord of affection. You wept, in my arms, the loſs of her whom you, yet, fondly believed your ſiſter.—I cheriſhed the illuſion left, by diſſolving it, I ſhould weaken your confidence in my maternal love, weaken that tenderneſs which was now my only conſolation.

TO AUGUSTUS HARLEY.

My Auguſtus, *my more than ſon*, around whom my ſpirit, longing for diſſolution, ſtill continues to flutter! I have unfolded the errors of my paſt life—I have traced them to their ſource—I have

laid bare my mind before you, that the experiments which have been made upon it may be beneficial to yours! It has been a painful, and a humiliating recital—the retroſpection has been marked with anguiſh. As the enthuſiaſm—as the paſſions of my youth—have paſſed in review before me, long forgotten emotions have been revived in my lacerated heart—it has been again torn with *the pangs of contemned love*—the diſappointment of rational plans of uſefulneſs—the diſſolution of the darling hopes of maternal pride and fondneſs. The froſt of a premature age ſheds its ſnows upon my temples, the ravages of a ſickly mind ſhake my tottering frame. The morning dawns, the evening cloſes upon me, the ſeaſons revolve, without hope; the ſun ſhines, the ſpring returns, but, to me, it is mockery.

And is this all of human life—this, that paſſes like a tale that is told? Alas! it is a tragical tale! Friendſhip was the ſtar, whoſe cheering influence I courted to beam upon my benighted courſe.

The

The ſocial affections were neceſſary to my exiſtence, but they have been only inlets to ſorrow—*yet, ſtill, I bind them to my heart!*

Hitherto there ſeems to have been ſomething ſtrangely wrong in the conſtitutions of ſociety—a lurking poiſon that ſpreads its contagion far and wide—a canker at the root of private virtue and private happineſs—a principle of deception, that ſanctifies error—a Circean cup that lulls into a fatal intoxication. But men begin to think and reaſon; reformation dawns, though the advance is tardy. Moral martyrdom may poſſibly be the fate of thoſe who preſs forward, yet, their generous efforts will not be loſt.—Poſterity will plant the olive and the laurel, and conſecrate their mingled branches to the memory of ſuch, who, daring to trace, to their ſprings, errors the moſt hoary, and prejudices the moſt venerated, emancipate the human mind from the trammels of ſuperſtition, and teach it, *that its true dignity and virtue, conſiſt in being free.*

Ere I ſink into the grave, let me behold *the ſon of my affections*, the living image of him, whoſe deſtiny involved mine, who gave an early, but a mortal blow, to all my worldly expectations—let me behold my Auguſtus, eſcaped from the tyranny of the paſſions, reſtored to reaſon, to the vigor of his mind, to ſelf controul, to the dignity of active, intrepid, virtue!

The dawn of my life glowed with the promiſe of a fair and bright day; before its noon, thick clouds gathered; its mid-day was gloomy and tempeſtuous.—It remains with thee, my friend, to gild with a mild radiance the cloſing evening; before the ſcene ſhuts, and veils the proſpect in impenetrable darkneſs.

FINIS.

4 DE 58